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A comparative analysis of the decorated pottery of the second millennium BC Eastern Mediterranean

Volume I: Text

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DECLARATION

I, Anna Panagiotou, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

This project undertakes a comparative analysis of decorated pottery (or the lack thereof) in the complex, urban societies that developed around the Eastern Mediterranean in the second millennium BC: principally those of Egypt, the Levantine coast, and the Aegean. The aim of the analysis is firstly to assess the actual differences in the scale of the presence of decorated pottery between those eastern Mediterranean societies, secondly to study the association of these differences with social shifts and contexts and their implications for the configuration of culture and aesthetics, and ultimately, to arrive at a broader understanding of the roles that the production and consumption of decorated pottery can play as a part of material culture. My approach combines a broad, comparative perspective with detailed examination of select archaeological contexts and deposits, including first hand inspection of relevant pottery assemblages at Knossos. This systematic, comparative investigation of the social significance of those contrasts in practices across the eastern Mediterranean is informed by theories and methods derived from the fields of archaeology, anthropology, technology studies and the history of art and ornament.

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List of abbreviations used in text

ABSA…….Annual of the British School at Athens
BR……..Base Ring
BS……...Black Slip
BSRes…….Black Slip (Reserve Slip)
BSWM……....Black Slip Wheel-made
ConW……..Chocolate-on-White
DP……...Drab Polished
LB……...Late Bronze
LBA……Late Bronze Age
LC……...Late Cypriot
LH……...Late Helladic
LM……..Late Minoan
LPW……....Levantine Painted Ware
MB……..Middle Bronze
MBA……...Middle Bronze Age
MC……..Middle Cypriot
MH……..Middle Helladic
MK……...Middle Kingdom
MM……..Middle Minoan
MUM……...Minoan Unexplored Mansion
NEKA……..North-East Kamares Area
NK……...New Kingdom
NS/CPW……..North Syrian/Cilician Painted Ware
PWHM…….Plain White Hand-made
PWWM……Plain White Wheel-made
RDAC……Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus
RLWM…….Red Lustrous Wheel-made
RonB……Red-on-Black
RonR……Red-on-Red
RP…….Red Polished
RRS……...Royal Road South
RS……..Red Slip

RSRes……Red Slip (Reserve Slip)

RSWM……...Red Slip Wheel-made

RWB……..Red, White and Blue ware

SEX……Stratigraphic Museum Extension

SIP……..Second Intermediate Period

SWH……...South-West Houses

TIP……..Third Intermediate Period

WP……..White Painted

WPWM……...White Painted Wheel-made

WS……...White Slip

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Foreword

In the summer of 2005, I was preparing to start an MA in Egyptian Archaeology, and trying to develop my knowledge in the discipline by familiarising myself with some of the basic texts of the field. While reading Kemp's *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (2006 [1989]), I encountered for the first time the statement that pottery in Egypt is often not decorated. This was discussed in the context of investigating the possibility of the existence of folk traditions in dynastic Egypt, and pottery was examined, and rejected, as a potential site for the expression of such traditions. The assertion that the pottery of a region might have been overwhelmingly undecorated piqued my curiosity immediately. This curiosity remained at the back of my mind throughout the MA, until near the end of that year it collided with long-standing questions about the disparity between pottery decoration in the different macro-regions of the Eastern Mediterranean held by Cyprian Broodbank.

The scope of the study was an important early decision. It became immediately obvious that these questions would best be answered as part of a comparative study of the different regions of the Eastern Mediterranean – a region producing vast quantities of pottery, and a task that seemed daunting in its scale. It was necessary to restrict my initial ambitions to take on the entire Bronze Age and a wide range of pottery categories in it, to something that would be wide enough to offer opportunities for comparison, but still manageable. This project, in the end, came to focus on decorated pottery, instead of all pottery, and on the second millennium BC, and not the entirety of the Bronze Age, since that period encompasses some of the most famous pottery styles in the region, as well as the peak of interregional connections.

The adoption of a comparative perspective developed partly out of my personal academic history. It is no coincidence that the seeds of this project were planted at the same time as I was starting to study Egyptian archaeology, coming from a degree carried out in Greece, which placed emphasis on the Aegean Bronze Age. This move from the Aegean to Egypt situated me in a completely new context: encountering an unfamiliar material culture, while at the same time causing me to look at what I knew so far through a different prism. This contrast was what brought out the initial observation of the differences in pottery decoration: the strikingly low

levels of pottery decoration in Egypt, but at the same time it revealed how unusual the frequency and elaboration of pottery decoration in the Aegean was, and called for a deeper investigation of both these situations. The adoption of a comparative framework is a way to retain this contrast throughout this work, as well as recapture it for the reader: by placing material conceptually next to one another, we can keep looking at these differences with fresh eyes, and avoid missing what is really outstanding about an aspect of material culture, because it is familiar and appears to be natural within the limits of its area. In addition to that, in the Eastern Mediterranean we have the opportunity to see material being compared not only conceptually, by us, but physically, by them, through processes of contacts and exchange.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Research background and questions

In the course of shaping the observed contrast between Egyptian and Aegean ceramic practices into a PhD subject, I encountered David Wengrow's 2001 paper "The evolution of simplicity: aesthetic labour and social change in the Neolithic Near East". The model proposed therein introduced essential elements and connections to the initial spark of curiosity. Specifically this paper took further the investigation into the use of pottery decoration in two ways: the potential of making associations with social structure, and the necessity to come to terms with broader notions of the aesthetics of decorated objects, how they are used and what they mean. Using the examples of Neolithic and Bronze Age Egypt and Mesopotamia, Wengrow suggests that, as some structures of society become more complex, such as administration and bureaucracy, others tend to become simpler. In this way, a division is created between an elaborate elite culture, that is available to few, and the mass-produced and aesthetically deprived objects which are a part of the majority's life, such as pottery. Out of this intellectual background came four specific questions, which will be addressed in the course of the thesis. Here I will present these questions, and introduce ways in which they can be answered.

Question 1: How much?

The first question to answer is absolutely essential, because all further work to be carried out rests on the understanding this gives, and is one that has not been asked before in the archaeological literature on the eastern Mediterranean. What is the actual nature and scale of the difference in decorated pottery between the different macro-regions? I started this research with the understanding that such differences exist, based on the archaeological literature produced for each of these areas, but if we are to assess the importance and the implications of differences, we must first assess their actual scale, nature, and how they change over the second millennium BC, moving beyond assumptions and received understandings.

By talking about the nature and scale of decoration, I am referring to two measures: the relative quantity of decorated pottery, and its complexity. I propose to answer this both through case studies, at the most detailed level of specificity, and by

bringing together quantitative data and qualitative descriptions in the parts of the thesis that take a broader view, using both scales of investigation to compare macro-regions to one another. One central measure used is the percentage of decorated pottery, expressed as part of the total pottery assemblage, which can be applied at many different resolutions, from a context unit to the entirety of a site, and by cautious extrapolation, inform on a surrounding region. Further refinement of the means of quantification allows us to introduce variation in the complexity of decoration, in ways I will describe in detail in Chapter 3. In this way, it is also possible to compare the two phenomena (the prevalence and complexity of decoration), not only individually, from region to region and site to site, but also to one another diachronically, in the same unit of study.

Question 2: When?

Drawing upon the last point, the second question is what diachronic changes can be seen in pottery decoration, and how do they relate to other changes in society or between societies? This question has two parts: the first one essentially takes the above question, and adds a temporal component to it, tracking these qualitative and quantitative assessments through time for each of the macro-regions. The second examines the social histories of those regions and their material culture, and what changes can be seen. As social and material change are brought together, it is possible to start making connections between pottery and social conditions and characteristics. These ties are going to be especially visible at times of transition, which can help us locate influencing factors, and this is why such moments are singled out for study.

This question is approached through the data collected in response to Question 1. The increase or decrease in the quantity and complexity of pottery decoration is now considered at a more general scale, using all available sources of information, including settlement patterns, material distributions and other pottery data, but also written sources, where available, in order to achieve a sweeping understanding of broader changes at any given time. On the basis of these, we can begin making associations between shifts in the quantity or quality of decorated pottery and changes in the social contexts that accompany them. These associations can take as a starting point either a change in pottery, or a change in society. For example, one case where it has been possible to investigate this question at a unique level of detail and

complexity was by tracking the composition of ceramic assemblages in Knossos throughout the site's history, while in parallel re-examining that history and remaining alert to the dangers of a circular interpretation. Question 2 can be particularly powerful because, together with Question 1, it allows us to bring specificity to this project, by tying the changes to grounded, contextualised case studies, without losing sight of the broader picture.

Question 3: Where?

The third research question is what particularities of social structure is this emphasis associated with? This question relies heavily on a comparative perspective. Comparison as a method is also necessary to address differences in scale, in the first question, and difference in responses to social conditions in the second. Here, however, I am using it to move into an even deeper level of interpretation. By attempting to connect social structures to differential emphasis on pottery decoration (once again approached through the dual factors of quantity and quality), I am examining associations between societies configured in a particular way, or contexts creating certain conditions, and decoration's significance.

Question 3 also brings the perspective back to different macro-regions within the eastern Mediterranean, and to answer it I will build on the work carried out to answer the previous questions: after having evaluated the presence of decoration, seen how it changes through time and what social shifts these changes are associated with, it is possible to form a strong picture of each region, changing through time, and showing also the way society is structured in that region. This is based on the same kinds of data which have been used so far, but relies especially on those tied to specific contexts, in order to provide a deeper interpretation. There are also two elements which are very useful in providing an answer to Question 3: one is the examination of sufficient case studies, in order to see a range of social configurations and the role pottery plays in them and play them off against one another. A large quantity of data and interpretative caution are especially important in order to avoid the dangers of leaping from a specific instance to a broad conclusion. The other essential element is the study of cases which stand out from the rest, such as Cyprus, where both the social and ceramic characteristics are completely distinct from the surrounding areas.

Question 4: Why?

The fourth and last question is what does the above (i.e. why some social configurations place emphasis on pottery decoration while others do not) tell us about the overall role pottery plays, and about the wider characteristics of the society of which it is part? It is also the question with the broadest scope, which is why I will engage with it last, and it is essentially a more specific expression of the bigger question as to what can pottery tell us about society. Decorated pottery becomes, through this approach, a more focused pathway to engage with a core problem of archaeology, especially in a region as pottery-rich as the Mediterranean, and to explore to the fullest the information potential of at least one, decorative, component of ceramic production. This builds on the answers given to previous questions: once we get closer to understanding the "when" and "where" of pottery decoration, then we can take a broader view of it in society. Questions 1-3 act as threads running through each chapter in this study and connecting the case studies to one another, as well as the wide comparative perspective, while also taking into account the actual connectivity of regions in the past: these are not only parallel developments whose characteristics make them interesting to compare, but there is also physical interaction between the macro-regions studied here, whose impact and information potential it is important to assess.

Closing this section, I would like to note that, although this opposition between pottery-decorating practices is particularly striking in the eastern Mediterranean, this is not the only context for which similar questions have been posed. The question as to why pottery is decorated in some areas and periods and not in others, and what are the implications, concerns archaeologists in different regions of the world and archaeological traditions, and re-appears in the eastern Mediterranean itself in the first millennium BC (Al-Daire 2011: 1-8; Braun 1991; Vickers 1999: 4-7). This archaeological interest in decoration is a result of many factors, one of the most important being the significance of pottery in the discipline. It is often the main tool out of which relative chronologies are constructed, it offers information on contacts and influence between different regions, and decoration can be informative concerning social characteristics, or we may wonder what it expresses. This study is an effort to contribute to this discussion and take it further, and it was with that goal in mind that the research questions were formulated, and adapted to

approach the material from a new angle, with well-contextualised and thoroughly studied samples.

In this Mediterranean and ceramic intellectual context, my project addresses gaps that still exist in current research. First, it is a large-scale comparative overview of decorated pottery in the eastern Mediterranean macro-region, the first of its kind for many decades. Secondly, it attempts to take pottery further as a source of information and ask questions about its use in society, attempting to strike a balance between its great importance for archaeologists and questions about its significance for the actual users. Lastly, by highlighting the comparative element at starting from the smaller and more precise scale of the archaeological deposit, I can contribute towards evidence-based answers to questions about the use of decoration that have been raised cross-culturally, using as a starting point arguments developed in the context of socially complex and dynamic Mediterranean societies.

This introductory chapter set out the research questions guiding the thesis and will, in the following section, provide the historical and social background for each of the macro-regions, which is necessary in order to place ceramic developments in their proper context. Chapter 2 deals with the wider concept of decoration and the particular properties and potential of decorated ceramics. In it, I draw on art history, anthropology of art, technology and material studies and investigate how decoration can be defined, what are the points of interaction between decoration and society and what are the roles and effects of decorated pottery that can be identified in the archaeological record. Chapter 3 is concerned with methodological issues, both in the broader sense of placing this work in the context of eastern Mediterranean pottery studies (and assessing their implications for the current study) and more specifically with describing the approaches followed in the course of this work.

Chapter 4 is a broad-scale, comparative, diachronic study of the ceramic developments in the eastern Mediterranean in each of the macro-regions. Out of these changes, the shapes of broader trends are abstracted and compared to one another, with an awareness of the components of social power and complexity. Points of connection are also identified and their implications for the creation and reception of decorated objects examined. The subsequent four chapters present and analyse the bulk of the data from the case studies making up the core of the thesis and the main

support for the arguments made. They are distinguished according to macro-region and each is further subdivided along internal chronological and geographical lines. Chapter 5 deals with the ceramic data from Crete, including the samples studied from the Stratigraphic Museum at Knossos and published information. Chapter 6 is dedicated to Blue Painted pottery from New Kingdom Egypt, Chapter 7 discusses Cyprus and Chapter 8 the Levant, divided into southern and northern segments. Chapter 9 is the concluding chapter, bringing together the results from the body of the thesis and providing answers to the research questions through relating the ceramic characteristics to the social criteria identified as significant and re-investigating the hypothesis that provided the initial impetus for the study.

The second millennium BC in the eastern Mediterranean

In this section, I am going to set the stage in which the characteristics of pottery and the changes in it will be explored, by presenting the broad historical context in which these changes took place, and with which they interact, and which makes up the social environment in which pottery is used. In order to enable a comparative approach, each area will be examined according to a series of criteria, assessing different social structures. I have so far used the term 'complexity' as a shorthand, but in truth this contains multiple components, which can vary independently of one another and differ in their presence as well as their scale. These can be separated and used as criteria for study (Nelson 1995; Souvatzi 2007: 37-38; Yoffee 1993: 64). These criteria are centralisation (whether multiple foci of power exist in a macro-region), diversity (how similar are social processes or material culture across the macro-region) hierarchy (whether a hierarchical organization exists and how flexible it is), and finally interaction.

The study area includes the Aegean (mainly Crete), Egypt, Cyprus and the Levant from about 2000 BC to around 1200 BC (see Table 1.1). During this period in the eastern Mediterranean a variety of complex societies developed, offering challenging opportunities for a comparative study. It is the variety across the region that makes a comparative approach so meaningful: the unique combination of similarities and differences in society and material culture. The matter of

interrelations, corresponding to the criterion of interaction, mentioned above, becomes also very significant: all these areas are connected by the Mediterranean (Broodbank 2013: 391-415). This connection becomes more and more intense as the Bronze Age progresses, until, at its peak late in the Late Bronze Age it is almost impossible to look at one of them without being led to the others. The combination of intense connections, common or parallel developments, and local differences, are the characteristics that make the Eastern Mediterranean an ideal context in which to carry out a comparative study (Parkinson and Galaty 2009: 22), as well as adding the challenge of identifying the effect of interaction and isolating the significant factors for change and the influence of one area onto another.

Egypt

Egypt is a heavily researched area from the perspective of history and archaeology, offering rich sources of information and the possibility of the use of written and iconographical sources, as well as unique challenges (some of which outlined in Chapter 3) and a long history of excavation and publication that any recent work must take into account. The beginning of the second millennium BC coincided with the beginning of the Middle Kingdom (c. 2000-1700 BC) in the 12th Dynasty, a period of large-scale building and expansions (Franke 1995: 735-739) and the creation of an organized administrative infrastructure reaching up the Nile to the Second Cataract in Nubia, through a series of fortresses (Kemp 2006: 231-241). This administrative element and its efficiency is considered one of the characteristic elements of the Middle Kingdom.

Efforts have been made to capture the essence of this period, and the desire to achieve a neat bureaucratic ordering of the social world seems to be one of the its defining features (Callender 2000: 174; Grajetzki 2006: 140-142; Kemp 2006: 163-231). One of the material, and archaeologically visible, expressions of this drive to create a world divided in clear and distinct categories is the establishment of planned settlements, which are usually attached to a larger institution (Franke 1995: 742-745). The clear expression of social ranks in space through architecture, has been understood as a vision of society built in bricks and mortar (Kemp 2006: 193). At the

same time, these settlements were focal points that brought together not only a diverse Egyptian population, but also large numbers of foreigners. Starting as they were constructed with a very distinct idea of what society was, or ought to be, makes them excellent bases for the study of alterations and manipulations in their conditions, which show the rigidity of these visions subverted through human action.

It is a recurrent observed pattern in the history of Egypt that periods of stronger state control alternate with fragmented ones, when the boundaries and nature of state power changes (Bourriau 1997: 159-168). This happens in the Second Intermediate Period (c. 1700-1550) when regional differences are emphasized and archaeological sequences diverge from region to region (Bourriau 2010a: 11). The division is particularly strong between the Theban kingdom, governed in a similar way to the Middle Kingdom, and the Delta (Quirke 1991: 123-139). This part of Egypt was now under the intense influence of the Southern Levant, ending with the dynasty of the Hyksos based at Tell el-Daba (Avaris) (Forstner-Müller I. 2003: 170-172). The Second Intermediate Period is particularly interesting as a period of intense fluctuation in central state authority. Additionally, this period combines changes in state structure with increased interaction and exchange between areas, especially in the Delta (Bietak 2010: 139; Bourriau 2000: 195). Recognising these factors allows the study of their impact, both separately and together, on material culture.

The Egyptian kingdom was unified again at the beginning of the New Kingdom (c. 1550-1070), initially by the 18th Dynasty. There is sometimes a tendency in Egyptian history and archaeology to treat Intermediate periods as mildly embarrassing interludes to be forgotten as soon as the centralised pharaonic state gets back on course. To avoid this, it is necessary, having looked carefully at the preceding period, to ask what connections stand out, and, if changes occurred during the Intermediate Period, how they resonated in the re-established state. For Egypt, the New Kingdom is the time of empire, reaching the maximum extent of its influence, from the Fourth Cataract in the south to Qadesh in the North, with important ramifications for the surrounding areas (O'Connor 1983: 194-195). It is often considered the peak of brilliance in material culture (Kitchen 2000: 763-773), producing some of the most famous artifacts from Bronze Age Egypt, and it is in that context that we need to see ceramics as well, which will give the opportunity to

explore this time of richness in a greater and much more widely-used category of material. It is also a period of intense cultural exchange between Egypt, the Near East and the Aegean, exemplified in the archive from the short-lived capital of Amarna (Liverani 2008: 161-162; Schneider 2008: 254).

The Southern Levant

The neighbouring southern Levant is strongly connected to Egypt and the developments that take place there. From the MBII period (1950-1750) the dominant characteristic is the formation of an urban culture in the area, with small sites turning into planned, fortified city-states surrounded by a network of rural settlements. Some of these, such as Aphek and Megiddo, provide full stratigraphic sequences for these transitions. Palaces also appear and the location of sites in relation to the international trade and contact routes seems to be an important factor. Such contacts can be seen in the sites themselves, expressed in architectural influences from the surrounding regions such as Syria and Egypt (Finkelstein 1992; Kempinsky 1992: 159-194). These associations with the developing connections of the eastern Mediterranean are not surprising, considering the geographical position of the Southern Levant between the state of Egypt and the larger configurations forming in the north.

After the initial expansion of occupation, local blocs become more prominent and fixed, with urbanization reaching a peak in the second half of the MBIIb (1750-1650), and indications of accumulation of wealth accompanying the centralization, as at Tell el-Ajjul (Kempinsky 1992). If we want to draw the profile of the Southern Levant in rather rough terms, we could characterise it as an area where we can see the creation of large urban sites with palatial centres as seen in many parts of the Mediterranean, but at an intermediate scale that is different from both the more integrated Egyptian state and the large territories of the Northern Levant, with the exception of sites at the northern end of the region, such as Hazor, where the differences with the northern Levant are blurred. These multiple palatial centres with their networks of territories correspond to multiple local elite structures and variations in the employment of material culture.

The region has very strong ties with the Delta, culminating in the Hyksos kingdom, the exact nature of whose connections with the Levant, both northern and southern, is unclear (Bietak 2010: 156; Kempinsky 1997). The strong connection continues in the Late Bronze Age, this time of a different nature, which includes a power imbalance favouring Egypt, whose directly controlled fortresses and sites can be found here. Urban life declines in general, perhaps as a result of direct or indirect Egyptian intervention, with the overall number of sites decreasing and features such as fortification disappearing. In the same period, the Southern Levant was a centre for trade, with imports reaching their peak, arriving from many different areas, especially Cyprus (Goren, 1992: 217-222). Once again, it is interesting to look at these developments in relation to the geographical situation of the Southern Levant, as well as the scale of the social configurations that form in it. On the one hand, the southern Levant exists between areas whose power, influence and connections, as well as conflicts, increase in the Late Bronze Age (Egypt, the northern Levantine states and the Mesopotamian and Anatolian empires), keeping the intermediate zone in control, and on the other hand it is well-placed to take advantage of the strong ties it could form with places such as Cyprus, especially those sites that are located at the meeting of land and sea routes. Moreover, the diversity of social formations in the region and the opportunities created by the pre-existing connections and the loose and sporadic application of effective Egyptian control could potentially lead to greater flexibility in the use of material culture for negotiating their place in the second millennium eastern Mediterranean world and more impermanence in the formation of social position and hierarchies.

The Northern Levant

In the Northern Levant, at the very beginning of the Middle Bronze age (c. 2000-1800 BC) there is a tendency for decentralization and small settlements, but before the MBII (c. 1800-1600 BC) urban life and regional centres start growing stronger again. In the west two large territorial states appear, one centred at Aleppo and the other controlling part of central Syria from Qatna, offering the opportunity to study yet another possible way of structuring authority and centralized political power, in this case also incorporating extended geographical territories. As in the southern Levant, there is an emphasis on fortification and palaces are constructed influenced by the architectural styles of different regions. Connections with other areas are important

and can be seen in the written sources as well as objects (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 288-326; Lemche 2000: 1195-1206): Byblos has intense relationships with Egypt going back in time to the third millennium and beyond, and has also provided the largest sample of Minoan pottery in the area. Minoan vessels have also been found at Sidon and possibly Beirut, but these sites of the Lebanese coast (including Aleppo itself) have been characterised by continuous occupation until the present day, restricting the availability of data for analysis in later chapters (Broodbank 2013: 303, 365; Caloi 2013: 365-366; MacGillivray 2008: 45-48).

In the Late Bronze Age, the Northern Levant and the remainder of Syria have a different relationship to external control compared to the Southern, as they become a shifting field of competition, incorporated into different empires, including the Mitanni empire, which was a local development and in conflict with Egypt and the Hittite empire in the 14th century, at the same time as maintaining the political structures that developed in the MB local territorial states, by now reduced in size under the influence of those empires (Evans 2008: 194-195; Al-Maqdissi 2008: 214-216). In Syria territories are larger, compared to the Palestinian ones, and the majority of the population lived in small villages, dispersed in those territories, rather than the urban centres. The coastal areas are heavily involved in trade with the rest of the eastern Mediterranean (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003:327-358). This is exemplified by the site of Ugarit, where the intense exchanges between the Aegean, Egypt, Anatolia and Mesopotamia are reflected in the material culture and imported pottery from different regions coexists (van Wijngaarden 1999).

Both in the Middle and the Late Bronze Age, the Northern Levant has many elements to offer for study, which are especially interesting when compared to the rest of the eastern Mediterranean. Some of these elements have to do with the social groups operating in the area. Local elites, acting in a local hierarchical and palatial structure, were in a very interesting position, being neither in the smaller, more easily controlled towns of the Southern Levant, nor in the large Egyptian, Hittite or Mitanni states. This scale allows for the development of great social diversity within groups, which can interact in interesting ways with the conditions created by interregional exchange, a phenomenon we can also observe at a different scale in Cyprus. We see therefore a coexistence of multiple modes of power: the local hierarchical structure

was sustained throughout the Bronze Age, and its elites had the ability to draw on resources. At the same time, there was an imperial oversight which can introduce new elements, as well as social groupings particular to the urban centres, especially the coastal ones where they intersect with independent trade agents. This co-existence of territories with different characteristics results also in significant material differences, despite being part of the same high-level political structure. In this project, the focus will remain on the Mediterranean side, but hints of this difference still come through in the case studies.

Cyprus

Across the sea, the island of Cyprus follows its own trajectory through the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. At the beginning of the Middle Cypriot (c. 1950-1650 BC) the lack of cultural uniformity in the island, along with the associated questions of whether the different areas can be treated together, remains a characteristic under investigation, exacerbated by the lack of excavated settlements (Coleman 1992: p. 283-288). Most sites are small, seem to downplay social differences between their members, and they were organised in large kin-based networks, through which goods and people moved (Frankel 1993; Frankel and Webb 2001; Knapp 1999). Vertical social differentiation, however, developed as the MC progressed. The exploitation of copper began to intensify in the same period and the importance of this metal in the history and relationships of the island becomes especially pronounced, along with overseas trade contacts with Egypt and the Levant (Steel 2004: 135-138).

In this early part of the second millennium BC history of Cyprus, the island is structured in a completely different way, as well as at a different scale, from the societies we have encountered so far, being the only example of a society which, if not unstratified, at least downplays the expression of differences in power. Additionally, it has the peculiarity of strong regional fragmentation in a relatively limited geographical space (a characteristic that ebbs and flows in Bronze Age Cyprus, as state power does in Egypt). From the beginning of our examination of it, we are primed for a distinct trajectory and process of urbanization, in addition to a differently-structured social world. At the same time, the increasing metal and trade-

fuelled connections of the island show that it is everything but isolated, a feature which must be taken into account when trying to understand its peculiarities.

In the beginning of the Late Cypriot phase (1650-1050 BC), a period of upheaval, characterised by regionalism, instability and a shift of settlement to the eastern and southern coasts (Steel 2004: 150-154), was followed by population increase and settlement expansion. The character of this transitional period and its place in the long-term historical processes identified on the island are major concerns in the study of this phase. This time of change occurred just before uniformity increased across the island, and the social negotiations in it played a part in shaping the structures that followed, especially the interaction between the continued emphasis on regionalism within Cyprus and the international networks with which different Cypriot communities were becoming engaged, and the opportunities that these provided to parts of Cypriot society to establish alliances and start differentiating themselves, on the basis of the island's desirable copper resources (Eriksson 2007: 29; Knapp 1997: 46-47; Knapp et al. 1990). Urban communities formed on the southern coast and settlements were organised in a more hierarchical way, integrating different types and sizes of settlement and specialised centres. Some of these (characterised as "gateway communities", Crewe 2007: 12-13) were especially advantageously positioned to act as passage points between regions and their products, and could have inserted themselves in the trade networks of the Eastern Mediterranean by forming ties with already established centres in Syria, the Levant, and Hyksos Egypt.

There is still very limited evidence for a centralised authority controlling all or most of the island and no bureaucratic sites can be identified, suggesting the existence of many centres, likely operating in different ways, but the degree of centralization and the nature of the connections between areas is still under debate (Steel 2004: 181-183; Knapp 2008: 132-153). Several alternative theories have been put forward to explain organisation at an island-wide level. These, involving models for settlements of different characters and their articulation, as well as the ways goods moved from one tier of settlement and one social group to the other, mostly refer to the last part of the LBA and use data later than LCIIC (Knapp 1997: 48-56). Even minimalist interpretations, however, that warn of the absence of archaeologically identifiable

centralised institutions in this period, argue that an increase in social complexity can indeed be demonstrated in this period in the mortuary record, which in Enkomi shows emphasis on foreign contacts in grave goods and the emulation of objects and iconography of the eastern Mediterranean elites, and perhaps through the implications of the construction of fortifications. Palatial authority is never established, unlike in many surrounding areas, leading to questions about the effect of these differences on the material world (Knapp 1993a).

This debate on the structure of political configurations on Cyprus is closely related to the identification of Alashiya, a place which appears in Near Eastern and Egyptian archives, especially the Amarna correspondence. The problem is whether Alashiya, which presents itself as ruled by a king on an equal footing with the rulers of Egypt and Mitanni, is located in Cyprus and if so, whether it represents part or all of the island, and even if there are significant differences in organisation between the 16th-14th and 13th centuries (Goren et al. 2003; Peltenburg 1996: 28-36; Webb 1999: 305-307). However, the "king of Alashiya" needs to be considered in the context of the very specific, formalised, language of the Amarna Letters and related diplomatic texts, where there is little room for accommodation of alternative ways of structuring power. The question in that case is not where is the king of Alashiya, but whether there is a king at all (Broodbank 2013: 407), and the evidence from archaeology can provide a more reliable answer to that.

Aegean

In the Aegean, the form of societies in Crete changes from the beginning of the second millennium, offering suggestions of increasing hierarchy and stratification, solidifying with the creation of palaces at urban centres such as Knossos, Phaistos and Mallia, which act as the centres of regional polities, using writing and sealing systems (c. 1900-1750 BC). This is a long and complex process with systematic and sustained differences between groups appearing earlier, in the later Prepalatial period (Whitelaw 2004: 236-238). This process is not uniform all over the island and it stretches from MM IA almost to the end of the period, with difficulties in pin-pointing an exact point of transition and a variety of processes leading up to it (Bevan 2010a; Schoep and Knappett 2004: 21-31). A short period of destructions is followed by rebuilding and expansion at many sites in the Neopalatial period (c. 1750-1500 BC). The patterns of

settlement and power in this new period seem more structured. The palace and town of Knossos stand out by their characteristics and impressive size, raising questions about the structure of power in this period on the island, the relation of the centres with one another and whether Knossos held a different, more central, position in this system (Bevan 2010a; Van de Moortel 2002: 189-207). Those centres have diverse characteristics and trajectories, which range from the construction of a palace late in the period, as in Zakros, to the destruction of a palace in the same period, as in Galatas (or even the destruction of an unfinished palace in LM IB Phaistos), to sites with administrative features but lacking a palace, as in Ayia Triadha (Rethemiotakis 2002: 56-66; Schoep 2002: 23-29).

The palaces, and the central buildings that share characteristics with them, are an especially visible setting in which we encounter contexts related to the communal conspicuous consumption of food and drink. This practice and the pottery associated with it are very important to the discussion of the society and the developments of the Neopalatial. These activities play an important role in the effort to interpret how social differences could have been created, expressed and emphasized in competition while at the same time keeping actual conflict to a minimum (Driessen 2002). Display in the course of communal events encouraged an increased interest in the elaboration of material culture involved in these events (Hamilakis, 2002: 186-187; 2013: 174-175) as well as in many areas of life, which is consistent with the development of competition over power. The structure of the competing groups is a hotly debated subject, with suggestions ranging from traditional, fixed authority groups to factions bringing together members of different social positions with shared identities and social goals participating in the competition (Driessen et al. 2002: x; Hamilakis, 2002: 188-195), leading to the recreation of a social structure for Minoan Crete, at least for the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods, that is less restrictive, centralized and well-defined and more unstable and competitive (Hamilakis, 1999; Schoep 2002: 32-33). In fact, this impression has been explicitly contrasted to pharaonic Egypt, as seen in Driessen's (2002:12) intriguing comment: "It may be assumed that Crete's insular position held it at large from corrupting influences from nearby centralistic bureaucratic states such as pharaonic Egypt."

After LM IB many administrative centres were destroyed and Knossos was the only one that continued to function, perhaps with the involvement of mainland groups (Rehak and Younger 1998). This variable process of consolidation and dissolution of palatial centres, taking place at different rates in different parts of the island, is an expression of a wider current of constant social shifts, with power being created, re-reinforced, re-negotiated, changing, and occasionally failing, as it moves between focal points and the people and groups who hold it. Overall, it is within this state of flux that we can see the material culture and the pottery of Crete, as the creations of a palatial culture, similar in many characteristics to those we have seen develop elsewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean, but at the same time consisting of groups which are arguably never entirely secure in their positions.

The major centre of influence shifts after the fall of Third Palace Knossos from Crete to the Mycenaean states on Mainland Greece, which have not been included in the analysis, but are briefly discussed here since they contribute some interesting counterpoints to Crete, discussed in Chapter 4, and introduce a discussion on the production of decorated pottery for trade and its reception. Starting from a simpler social organisation in the Middle Helladic (c. 2000-1700 BC), complexity increases especially in the Shaft Grave period, a phase known mostly from the rich burial record that precedes the palaces and indicates a phase of intense competition and experimentation (Shelmerdine 1997). After this phase, social hierarchies expand and solidify and palaces appear in many areas of southern Mainland Greece, each controlling small states (Wright 2004). How these states were organized, whether along parallel lines, and therefore how much we can infer about one on the basis of the structure of another, remains an open question (Killen, 1999: 87-89). The existence of a centralised administration in some is known from administrative documents in Linear B, but the degree of control exercised over the polity in general and its inhabitants is open to question (Galaty and Parkinson, 1999: 1-8). What is especially interesting, when these palaces are compared both to Crete and to the early states of the eastern Mediterranean, is that this trajectory seems to be more in line with Levantine developments rather than the Minoan palatial centres. At the same time, Mycenaean palaces, on the basis of surviving administrative resources, exercised selective control on their economic basis, loose in the sense of ignoring large parts of the economy but targeted to specific products and resources, and

perhaps only actually actively controlling the parts of their territories that were relevant to this process, i.e. the routes providing access to resources and allowing further dissemination, rather than the full geographical extent (Sherratt 2001: 214-234). The connections of the Aegean world with the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean follow an interesting pattern, moving from a mostly peripheral and sporadic interest to more and more participation in international networks (Koehl, 2008:270-271; Sherratt and Sherratt, 1991: 368-373). In the middle of the LH III period, Mycenaean imported ceramics and their contents reach the eastern Mediterranean in their thousands for the first (and only) time, most of them originating from the Argolid and peaking around 1300 BC.

Chapter 2. Making decoration work: the concept and practice of decoration

Introduction

This chapter sets out some basic theoretical frameworks and introduces ideas that will inform the study of the archaeological material in the following chapters. It determines how I approach decorated pottery in this work, and has important practical implications in the delineation of the material for study and how inferences are drawn from it. Theory is directly involved in the definition and understanding of decoration itself. It is also necessary in order to interrogate the concept of aesthetics and its impact in the study of decoration. Additionally, I use it to discuss the role that decoration plays in creating societies and in people's behaviour in them, to explore some of the ways in which decoration might operate, as well as to introduce questions that will become central in understanding pottery, through seeing how decoration is implicated in the creation of value and connections. I am also investigating the means through which we can approach the role of decorated objects as a part of everyday life. To answer these, I draw on art history and especially anthropology, as well as examining how the terms “decoration” and “style” have been understood in archaeology, and how they can be integrated with the material culture-focused approach of technology studies. Before moving on to discuss specifically how decoration can be defined, I will give a brief overview of the relative approaches of these disciplines, and what each have to offer.

There are two groups of questions art history and the anthropology of art are particularly suitable to investigate, making them a good base to begin the study of decorated pottery from. The first group tackles the concepts of aesthetic creation, value and appreciation, a complex of ideas that has a troubled relationship with decoration. This issue was first raised in the formation of this project through Wengrow's 2001 core paper. The second group explores the concept of decoration, both theoretically, concerning the ways that it has been thought about and used, and more practically, in a way which will be helpful in delineating the category of ceramic material under question.

In the field of art history, before the 19th century AD, ornament was not a subject of specific study or attention. In the Victorian period, however, it became a separate subject to be defined and studied theoretically, partly under the influence of movements reacting to industrialisation and focusing on craft (Summerson, 1977: 5). There is a tendency in European art history to divide art and ornament and apply that division cross-culturally (Rawson, 1984: 23). Anthropology has been caught up in similar divisions, and as a result the objects which are usually displayed under the label of art in ethnological museums are those that would fit the European art historical idea of decorative art, including decorated pottery (Gell, 1998: 73). Having introduced the term 'ornament', I need to note that although some texts, such as Grabar (1992), argue for a distinction between "ornament" and "decoration" as specifically defined terms, I use them in very similar ways. Grabar, for example, uses these terms to make a subtle distinction between an element applied to an object (decoration) and the property (of being decorated) of that object. However, even in those definitions, the description of "ornament" includes the word "decoration", showing that even in a more technical, art historical, application of the terms, they still cross-cut. Additionally, in archaeological usage, other, often more precise, terms cover the elements that can be applied to an object, and so the distinction becomes even less meaningful.

This division of art and ornament places archaeology, with material culture as its main source of information, in a confusing position. The confusion becomes more intense when the objects under study are decorated vessels, where it is hard to avoid associations with Greek Classical pottery, which is often described in terms of its aesthetic values and placed at the beginning of the study of European art. It is useful then to remain a little longer on the subject of art and specifically its relation with the aesthetic properties of decoration (see Danto 1998; Genette 1999). For the practical purposes of the study of objects, in the early stages of this research, a separation of the two was considered suitable in order to avoid the implications carried by the labelling of an object as art. There is support for this position from Danto (1988), who claims that art is not necessarily identified with anything that causes an aesthetic response, and that there is always a line separating the artwork from the artefact, which is only an instrument.

This approach, however, is problematic in many ways, and specifically for the purposes of this project, since it makes it much more difficult to relate different aspects of the object to one another and view them in a unified way. Art historical perspectives often focus on judgement of appearance in a way that can be applied to Western art but is unsuitable for archaeology, where the materiality of the objects is inescapable, along with the aspects of its actual use in life, by people. Additionally, applying a judgement which originates from the study of Western art carries the danger of projecting an ethnocentric aesthetic idea into the past, by operating under the assumption that these standards are universal. A drinking cup is not a painting, no matter how elaborately decorated, and very rarely can we speak of a pure aesthetic judgement divorced from everything else, unless the object is displayed in such a way for a current audience. From this point of view, the anthropology of art seems to be more useful, although there as well exists some ambiguity over the concept of aesthetics. When it comes to using notions of decoration and aesthetic properties as they appear in the art historical and anthropological literature, there are strengths and weaknesses to both, and so it is unwise to exclusively rely on one. The search for definitions and uses of decoration by art historians can be very illuminating, but when it comes to the place of the decorated object in society and its use, anthropology and archaeology are better equipped to provide a theoretical basis.

Defining decoration

In the archaeological literature a variety of definitions of pottery decoration have been proposed. Jihad (2011:6), for example, defines pottery decoration as "any attempt by the ceramicist to change the appearance of the surface of a vessel to make it more attractive or pleasing to the eye". This introduces one oft-included element, attractiveness, as well as attributing purpose to the creators of the vessel. Another approach can be seen in Braun (1991), where decoration is defined as the non-essential manufacture characteristics, which go beyond what is needed for a pot to work as a physical tool and require extra time and effort, elements of definition also incorporated in many definitions of style (see below). This adds a further element, the opposition between decoration and function, with decoration as something extra. These arguments are not exclusive to archaeology, and they can also be found in art historical works asking the same questions (Gombrich 1979:146; Grabar 1992: xxiii-xxiv).

The core issue around which most of the attempts to define ornament revolve is this contrast between functionality and non-functionality, with the element of aesthetic attractiveness or appreciation also playing a large part, thereby blurring the lines between how decoration works and its essential nature or characteristics (Crilly 2010; Rawson, 1984: 16). The different discussions of decoration often refer to the evolution of the idea of decoration and related ones (Coomaraswamy, 1939). This becomes part of a narrative of an original stage in the practice of decorating, when the function of an object and its ornamentation constituted a unified whole, which then separated into parts at a later stage. In the original state, the object is envisioned as a whole, which cannot be conceived as complete without the decoration. The same trend can be observed in etymological examinations of the different words referring to "ornament" and "decoration" in, at least some, languages, whose meaning tends to degenerate from something that is a necessary equipment, essential for the efficacy of the object and its completeness, to something that can be removed at will (Coomaraswamy 1939).

This idea of decoration as added, external, and something that can be either included or omitted without any significant consequences for the object, plays an important part in many discussions, with function placed in opposition to embellishment (Staubmann 1997; Gombrich 1979: 146; Grabar 1992: 5-25), which is defined as what is not necessary for the stability, use or understanding of the object (Grabar 1992: xxiii-xxiv) and is characterised as "wilfully uneconomic" (Summerson 1977: 6). Many of these judgements, however, are formulated with respect to current views of ornamentation. For many of these, the progression described above from an original state of unity to a detachment of the decoration from the object is also seen as a development in time, from the past to the present, where in the (slightly idealised) past objects were conceived of as wholes, while in the more industrialised present we tend to artificially separate their attributes. They have therefore to be used with more caution when we try to approach the decoration of ancient ceramics.

The separation of decoration from the object can lead to the treatment of the surface as a distinct entity, like a canvas. Most of the pottery we are going to deal with was not created primarily to be looked at, but at the same time there is a powerful aspect of vision which cannot be ignored, and that is hinted at by some of

the case studies to follow. Between the object and the surface, however, there are other ways in which decorated material culture can be understood and used. One idea that I explore later in this chapter is that of material culture as a "spread", a group of material objects co-existing and co-presented in space, acting as a framework for action, which blurs the boundaries between seeing, using, and existing in a certain kind of environment, all this potential brought together by the properties of decoration. This, for example, will be very useful in informing the ways we can see some of the Blue Painted pottery in the New Kingdom, which is the subject of one of the case studies, the painted designs often taking the forms of garlands on large and medium-sized closed vessels, the same garlands which are seen in depictions of banquets framing a scene or activity.

The anthropology of art entails a different perspective on decoration, as seen in the work of Gell (1998: 74), in which decoration is intrinsically functional. This is a particularly useful point for archaeology, with material culture as its main source of information, because it suggests that decoration's presence means something, and is therefore a useful starting point for approaching other differences in the use of the object, especially its social function. In some examples of decorated pottery, this decoration is an integral part of the object and its role, for example in display on communal occasions. The role of display in that way could not have been fulfilled in the absence of decoration, which is therefore functional and essential. Considering it as such offers many more opportunities to incorporate it in the social context and examine the roles it might assume in relationships between people. The element of intention in the definitions above is also important and should be retained. The diversity of forms it takes in the area of study, and especially the fact that it can be used, or not, shows that it is a choice.

Other ways of defining decoration are involved with issues beyond functionality. One of them is the opposition between form and content. Decoration can be placed at one end of the spectrum as "pure" form, in its most developed stage not carrying a message but simply serving to make the object it adorns more attractive and intriguing to the eye (and mind) of the viewer (Rawson 1984: 23). Another point tied closely to the definition of decoration is its origin, and, closely related to that, the intention or drive behind it. According to Riegl, the presence of decoration on early

tools shows that it expresses elementary artistic principles from its early appearance. In it, he sees the origin of human creative activity, since it is a product of the creator's will (Riegl 1992). This view may simplistically disregard some important aspects of decoration, but it poses an interesting question: if the decoration of objects is indeed an expression of an existing fundamental drive, then what does its absence mean? The potential of decorated objects to be used as fields of contention and negotiation, explored later in this chapter, will throw more light on this question.

The definition of decoration is not only a theoretical issue guiding the questions that can be asked about it, but also a practical matter when it comes to its identification, and therefore the inclusion of something into the category of "decorated" or not. The tools are now available to arrive at a working definition of decoration, combining the idea of intentionality and practical needs. We can therefore define decoration as an intentional investment of effort into the appearance of the object, manifesting on its surface. This point of view and definition has practical implications in its translation into a working criterion for the inclusion or exclusion of vessels in the study. Some styles of decoration clearly align their own group, as the Egyptian Blue Painted pottery, but a more general understanding is needed for the majority of the material. I have decided to consider as decorated any vessel that has a patterned surface that was produced intentionally. This includes incisions and impressions, relief work, and any painting which is not accidental. On the other hand, I am excluding an overall slipped or burnished surface, not because these are not indications of investment in the object, but because it is useful heuristically to draw a line at a point where it is easier to make distinctions. Also, practically, this kind of patterned surface is often easy to distinguish on the basis of archaeological descriptions and categories. These criteria are detailed in Chapter 3 and they are meant to be applied in all the areas of study. It is difficult to draw a clean line between "plain" and "decorated" and it is unavoidable that some degree of subjectivity will be involved in the final decision. One could say, for example, that there is more effort invested in a carefully burnished vessel than in one where the rim has been dipped in paint. I would argue, however, that in the selection of a criterion that can be used cross-culturally, a level of arbitrariness is mitigated by its consistent application. I chose, therefore, a definition that is sufficiently broad, can account for common practices such as splash decoration, and also produces meaningful results.

When the central premise of a research project is based on a basic distinction (that of decorated objects), it is necessary to defend not only the criteria according to which the distinction is made but also making the distinction at all, especially defending it against the accusation that this explicit interest in, and isolation of, decoration is a characteristic of modern studies of the material and would not have been meaningful to the creators and users of the pottery. In making the distinction, however, I am less interested in necessarily forcing it on the explicit perception of pottery in the Bronze Age and more in examining how we can use this distinction to learn more about the Bronze Age, even if the category is only partially 'real' (Miller 1985 11-12).

Pottery decoration and archaeological discussions of style

The ideas that some characteristics of an object are non-essential, some are interchangeable, and what that means, bring together the discussion of decoration in archaeology and the concept of style (Conkey and Hastorf 1990: 1-4). Style has been the subject of heated debate in archaeology and has been defined in many different ways (Hegmon 1998: 264-265). This section is not intended as a full review of that field, nor do I consider this research a study of style. I am going instead to use this literature to situate the research carried out here within wider archaeological and anthropological discussions and use those discussions to clarify and illuminate the concepts and ideas presented here. My work involves what can be identified as a potential aspect of style, making it necessary to engage with it. A simplistic but accurate way to describe this relationship is that style is not identified with decoration, but decoration is always a subset of style. In addition to this, the debates concerning style, decoration and pottery are easily confused by the frequent use of the term 'style' in a conventional way in the field of pottery studies in order to discuss or describe different kinds of pottery decoration. This makes it necessary to address first the conscious use of style as a methodological tool, before we encounter it as a descriptor of pottery.

The various definitions of style share some commonalities (Hegmon 1992): the element that many of them identify is that style is a way of recognising similarity and difference at the same time, a feature that has also been identified by other researchers, such as Wilk (Conkey 2006: 361; Wilk 1995: 110-133): Similarity refers

to the recognition of groups of material and difference to the identification of variation, both within the members of a group, and between different groups. Moreover, similarity might be an outcome of the process of interest in skill variation, in order to facilitate comparisons between objects for the users of the material themselves (Bliege Bird and Smith 2005). Style also has connections to the idea of function (Miller 1985: 53-55), whether it is the factor that moves beyond function, or the choice between elements fulfilling equivalent functions, or the addition of elements which serve no apparent function. These elements are shared, because the underlying questions that researchers are trying to answer through the concept of style are the same, and they are also problems that have already presented themselves in the study of decoration. Despite these common questions, there are also essential differences in specific approaches.

Style is often defined as a category of formal variation involving choice among equivalents (David *et al.* 1998; Sackett 1990: 35), and has also been identified as what makes it possible to recognise an item as a member of a group (Miller 1985: 35). It is possible to group the definitions of style into two broader categories: those that see style in the way things are done, and those that find style in how things look (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 236). Another approach to a definition has been, following Sackett, as 'isochrestic variation', which is reproduced between objects not intentionally, but following the way things are done. Isochrestic variation is not identical to style, but rather style is one kind of isochrestic variation (Hegmon 1998: 267). One of the major discussions in the research into style concerned the differences between Sackett's approach, emphasising the following of learned paths, and the 'iconological approach', focusing instead on symbolic content as a way of conveying social information and establishing identity (Hegmon 1992; Sackett 1985; Wiessner 1985). More compositional approaches have argued that these two views are not actually mutually exclusive, and that there can be different kinds of style, sometimes representing different aspects of the same object.

Style is also connected to function: essentially, the question of what style "does" is similar to that of what decoration "does", and subject to the same tension between understanding the active role of decoration beyond the "purely aesthetic" on one hand, and on the other defining style in a way that reflects the differentiation

aspect identified above. This tension leads to what Dietler and Herbich (1998: 237) identify as the negative definition of style: that style is what remains after function and technology have been accounted for. This is directly related to the idea of decoration as an added feature, which is separate and distinct from the object on which it is found. When using decoration as an investigative category, attempting to avoid a negative definition leads to a more integrative approach. The recognition of the role and importance of technology does not mean that there is nothing to be learned from focusing on decoration (which inevitably involves an element of artificial separation, since decoration is itself the result of, and part of, technology), but it shows the need for an understanding first of the decorated object as a unity, rather than the disembodied surface, and second for making the focus of the research explicit when we place decoration at the centre, rather than letting it imply all of the social aspects of pottery by default.

The connection with technology and the process of production has been a field of research where significant theoretical developments have been made (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 236; 238; Sillar and Tite 2000). Often in past literature, 'style' has stood in for decoration and its structure (Conkey 2006: 362-363). The more technological approach, however, assists in reversing this conception and in seeing material culture from a more productive angle: not seeing style as equivalent to a static decoration, but decoration as an aspect of variation, which can be informed through stylistic approaches which incorporate all aspects of the object. An effective way of achieving that integration for pottery has been through the *chaîne opératoire*, which incorporates the sequence of production in the product that we see in the archaeological record, and turns the focus to the potential of each step in the process as a choice among many, which contributes to the final object (Van der Leeuw 1993: 240). By saying that decoration is a choice, it is not necessarily implied that this is made in a fully conscious and deliberate way. Instead, the configuration of each society offers a range of available options according to different criteria, and the production of craft happens in the setting of those options (Mahias 1993: 157-158; 163-167; Van der Leeuw 1993: 238-240; Roux 2003: 12). Choice becomes involved with other issues, such as that of change in material culture, with new alternatives coming into play, sometimes randomly and unintentionally, and those being selected at different levels of consciousness (Shennan and Wilkinson 2001; Bentley, Hahn and

Shennan 2004). Combinations of *chaîne opératoire* with theories of practice and structuration, which contribute the dynamic element of change to the discussion, give perhaps the most fruitful approaches to style and allow it to contribute most to studying material culture and the part it plays (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 245-247; Hegmon 1998: 267-269).

These options appear natural and self-evident to a member of the society, but the application of comparative study from the outside reveals their full range. They are to some degree shaped by the suggestions and limitations of the material and the use they are intended for, but there is always space for different ways of arriving at the same result (Sillar and Tite 2000). Once a choice is established, it can be defined by those who follow it as the only one (at least until it changes, and diachronic studies show beyond doubt that it does). In our case, the comparison of different ways of making pottery shows not only that decoration is a choice, but also the different facets it can have, and the roles it can take on, through the process of its creation. In our area of study for example, an incised Red Polished bowl from Cyprus is not simply incised, but also handmade: the parts of the process are crucial in understanding the object as a whole, and they greatly increase the potential combinations of different varieties.

The difference between approaches to style are also differences in how we draw knowledge from it: whether it is conceived as a reflection of social conditions, or whether as a part of those conditions that is used to affect and change them, and that people consciously change, having some awareness of its impact. There has also been a chronological evolution of the idea: as the goals and questions of archaeology changed through time, so the definitions of what style is and what we can learn by studying it have been stretched to accommodate these. As processual archaeology developed, style was no longer just a way to classify things, but a way to access the social aspects of an object that has also been studied as a way to incorporate information into objects, often with linguistic parallels being drawn (Conkey 2006: 358-359), a perspective especially represented by Wobst (Hegmon 1992; Pollock 1983; Wobst 1977: 317-42).

This understanding of style has been used to approach the connection between social complexity and stylistic complexity, brought together by the proliferation of

social groups, the need to structure them and the increasingly elaborate requirements for messages exchanged among them. Critiques of Wobst's approach (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 240-242) have focused on the idea of the role that economy (here used in the sense of the conservation of energy or resources) plays in shaping the decisions about the creation of material culture, and the problematic assumptions about the desirability of a more efficient (following that sense of economy) way of transmitting social messages. Decoration (as an aspect of style) can have as a possible function the conveyance of social messages, but identifying this as the primary function cannot be supported in most cases, and is restrictive. The critique of the information-centred approach is also concerned with tautology: by defining decoration (or style) as the component of an artifact that transmits messages, it has been decided *a priori* what its function is, and the question of how to identify it, beyond making assumptions, is not actually answered.

A useful distinction made by Dietler and Herbich (1998: 243-244) is between signification and communication, and it can very easily be applied to decoration. The important difference is that decoration is not a direct means of communication in the way language is, but rather it evokes meanings as part of a system of signification which integrates symbolic expression with practical concerns and decisions. I am specifically going to call on this idea of decoration as evoking, rather than directly broadcasting or representing, in the context of the case studies, because it combines the efficacy and functionality of decorated objects with processes that are only partly conscious and intentional, and does not conflate function and intention, but instead it recognises that actions can be driven in certain directions by the conditions in which they operate, that decisions can be made in that semi- or unconscious context, and that even decisions which are not made explicitly still have effects.

Additionally, looking at this practical aspect of objects as a part of everyday life helps us avoid the trap of placing too much emphasis on explicitly articulated and examined meanings, which might not exist (Stahl 2002). This is important, because the concept of intentionality has been placed at the the centre of decoration's definition in this study. Intentionality, however, does not mean that every human action is taken with introspective consciousness and awareness of all its potential consequences and interpretations, in the same way that the social messaging of

material culture rarely works like a broadcasted written message. This is not how someone who is fully immersed in their own cultural milieu operates — for them this process is more automatic (Bourdieu 1977: 72-76), but in order for us to analyse and understand it we need to layer this language on top of it. One way to approach objects from this point of view, with a potential of understanding more subtly articulated meanings, is by following the trail of changes through time, both comparatively and contextually, and especially by examining what changes through time and what continues the same, which is precisely the approach that has been adopted in this work. Next to the idea of evoking, we can also add that of pleonasm (Lemonnier 2012: 128-131): saying that decorated objects (pottery, but also decoration across many media, especially when these are present together) can be a way of emphasizing an idea by repeating it in different ways.

A crucial point for making use of the concept of style in the contexts of this research is its employment as a node that brings together material culture and society. This can be considered as part of the larger discussion about variation and its association with social definition and competition (Hegmon 1992). Decoration, as a component of the same discussion, can also be seen in the course of the second millennium BC in the eastern Mediterranean to be involved precisely in negotiating the creation and social employment of variation. One critique has been that the literature has focused disproportionately on how style functioned rather than what constitutes style, and what that means (Abbink 1999: 23-27). Setting aside the validity of that assertion, this viewpoint has implications for the way decoration has been approached here, and the decision made to distinguish, for heuristic purposes, what decoration is and what decoration does. This is not to equate style and decoration but to point out that this duality of approaches and potential grouping of questions has also been identified in related areas of research, and that this division can be productive.

What decoration is/what decoration does, and how: bridging the gap to function

Creating and maintaining attraction

The decision to separate this section from the previous one on the definition of decoration is partly artificial, since, as we have already seen, definitions also depend on the identification of a function for decoration. However, dividing the two parts of

the question allows us to take further some of the issues already raised, brings out new ones and highlights how much these categories of questions cross-cut. The element of attraction and attractiveness to the eye has already been mentioned as part of definitions (Rawson 1984), but it is a function, as well as a defining characteristic, and in the following paragraphs I will analyse some of the mechanisms through which it is achieved. Attraction can be simply a reaction to the pleasurable feelings caused by looking at the ornamented object. These can arouse powerful emotions in the onlooker (Gombrich 1982: 138-155), sometimes without their awareness, for example through the use of repeated patterns which can create and satisfy expectations, offering a sense of mastery, security and relief from anxiety (Dissanayake 1992: 84, 162).

Attraction can also be understood in a more literal sense. Decoration captivates the gaze of the spectator or user (Gombrich 1979: 121-126). By guiding gaze and making it focus on certain points, decoration can follow or accentuate the structure of the object and express the principles on which it is based, a property that has been remarked upon in studies of architecture as well as pottery and the human body (David *et al.* 1988). The pull of ornamental patterns, however, goes further than the eyes. Patterns can also be essential to the psychological functioning of artefacts, attaching people to them and to the social projects of which they are part (Gell 1998: 74-84). Decoration invites us to follow, unravel and understand it, and from this intellectual challenge (which can never be entirely completed, and which is renewed every time we are confronted with the object), arise the adhesive properties of decoration.

The basis of this process lies in the mechanism of vision and the role of perception, which is often not dealt with in archaeological discussions. How we view a decorative design is not exactly an inherent property of the design but has to do with processes that take place in the eye and the brain of the observer. When looking at something, we do not take it in all at once, but in rapid small glimpses (Daw 2012: 158-161; 212; Hochberg 1972: 61-71). From this series of fixations, the object is reconstructed in the brain (and not the eye) where it is stored. Our vision is attracted by breaks and accents, points of difference which offer the most information about the design. Where these glimpses focus is predetermined not only by what grabs our

attention, but also what we expect to encounter. A basic guide to what we are looking for is habit and previous experience, which helps us organise the information we receive (Gregory 1998: 44). Generally, the more familiar we are with the rules governing a shape, the easier it is for us to construct it in our heads and see it, and this familiarity in the appearance of objects gives a sense of repose to the viewer (Gombrich 1979: 171).

Pleasure and attraction, according to psychological research, arises from the interaction between a person and an object, and the enjoyment also affects judgements of preference, and therefore value (Reber *et al*. 2004). This enjoyment results both from the recognition of familiar elements, and from the processing of novel ones. Following and understanding patterns is also involved in capturing attention, and are especially effective in cases when the viewer is confronted by something that goes contrary to what they expected – for example an impression of symmetry from a pattern which at first glance seems complicated. Variety or complexity of designs in general has the potential to create strong and pleasurable experiences, as well as confusion, because it creates expectations for how the pattern will be unravelled or followed, which can either be satisfied or frustrated. The psychology of the perception of decoration also offers support for the idea that a decorated object is not isolated, but embedded in a wider context (Rumelhart and McClelland 1982). In that context, different levels of analysis co-exist at the same time, stimulated by the different elements which make up the context. These elements reinforce one another, and make pattern recognition easier, and therefore more enjoyable. The content of a stimulus is another factor that affects how it is perceived (Leder et *al*. 2004; Reber et *al*. 2004): for example a decorative pattern or practice that has a specific meaning or association (or if its context does) is not the same as one that is not charged in the same way from the point of view of the user/viewer, even if their external characteristics are the same. This process can be shaped or guided by the producer, especially if the producer and the consumer of the object are operating in the same context, but it does not necessarily rely on their intention, and can be, to a large degree, one-sided. This is also important for the understanding of contacts and trade, particularly when we want to discuss the potential for the conscious employment of external characteristics and how these might translate.

The integration of decorated objects in a varied context is mirrored in the process of perception of decoration itself. This biological process is the same for all kinds of behaviour, from the viewing of "high art" to crossing the street. Looking at something that has an aesthetic effect on us, and appreciating it, is normal behaviour from a neuro-physiological point of view, but invested with more than usual emotional and cognitive interconnections, and it stems from the same apparatus that allows us to exist in the world (Dissanayake 1992: 140-153). The aesthetic effect, therefore, is not something that is only caused by a completely different category of visual stimuli, but a way to describe a response starting in and conditioned by the viewer. This emphasizes even further the usefulness of examining behaviour connected with those objects as a part of social life, and not some higher, separate aesthetic sphere. According to Gestalt psychology, the effect of a visual stimulus on the brain forms isomorphic structures with the expression of perceptual qualities, meaning that the effect of visual impressions can physically transfer the experience of the creator of the visual stimulus (Arnheim 1949; Sundqvist 2003: 148-165).

There is also a large literature on how specific motifs can work. Decoration usually uses prototypes, which can be specific or just correspond to general trends, which we can use and manipulate, either repeating them or deviating from them, and eliciting different responses (Dissanayake 1992: 160-175). Human beings also tend to be visually responsive to polarities and oppositions. Another effective way of organising decoration is the creation of asymmetrical balance, which has developed in many societies. Asymmetry is desirable up to a point, because it can suggest the effect of motion, but it can, as a general principle, become tiresome if it is excessive (Gombrich 1979: 121-138). As mentioned above, in the process of viewing, our eyes are attracted by accents, but if there are too many, our gaze is forced to move erratically, causing an uncoordinated impression. It is especially interesting when this is combined with the impression of motion that certain configurations of patterns can give, since humans have a known tendency to attribute intention in movement patterns, whether they involve figural representations or not (Castelli *et al.* 2000), as well as tending to connect the alteration of space through movement to the passage of time (Dissanayake 1992: 175).

Neuroscience can also be used to demonstrate characteristics of decoration which are understood implicitly in archaeology, but have a solid biological basis, such as the links between different modes of perception: the combination of different stimuli, such as touch and vision, is especially effective in attracting and holding attention, and the responses to the different stimuli serve to amplify one another (Macaluso *et al.* 2000). Additionally, the visual perception of decoration involves a range of sensory and motor responses simulated in the brain, as well emotional engagement, creating all the preconditions for a deep and complex experience (Cinzia and Gallese 2009; Freedberg and Gallese 2007). These findings support the assertion that the decorated object is more than the decorated surface, but incorporates many properties, as well as a context of use, which has a strong impact on how it is perceived.

There are, therefore, grounds in hard science for supporting the idea that decoration is a universally effective means of operating on those who see it, or eitherwise engage with it, even when they do not intend it to or realise that this is what it does. Decoration can affect the viewer very powerfully by operating on a different level from complete consciousness, especially when it is familiar enough for us to know what exactly to expect from it (Rawson 1984:21-22). However, because it can work at that level, it can also be very unsettling if something is wrong with it, but the dissonance between observation and expectation cannot be identified. This is one of the most interesting oppositions encountered in the literature concerning decoration, since there seems to be no consensus in the literature on how it operates and affects us. Does it slip below the threshold of consciousness, as Rawson and Gombrich suggest, or does it attract our attention and keep us focused and fixated on it, which is Gell's point of view? We also have to be aware that if ornament is meant to work without us noticing it, our conscious analytical attention to it will mark a shift in perspective.

Aethetics as a methodological tool

The work of Gell in the field of anthropology of art plays two parts in the context of this research. On the one hand, he offers tools to deal with the whole concept of patterned surfaces, the effects they might have and how they can be mobilised in a wider social context (and not as isolated images). On the other hand, Gell helps

weaken the hold of aesthetics on decorated objects, challenging their place as a starting point for understanding. This still allows the use of the term 'aesthetic' in the analysis, partly seen through the lens of what Gell called “methodological philistinism” (Gell 2006). Aesthetic properties in that sense are understood as what achieves the effect of an object in a specific social context – they do not refer to a vague, disinterested appreciation of beauty for its own sake, but to something that always has behind it some social use and intention, and is seen as an extension of its creator, user or owner.

Rejecting, therefore, some of the implications of aesthetics, it is still possible to recognise the potential of patterned surfaces to make an impact. This is very valuable for the arguments on which this study is based: that decoration has significant effects (which even have a biological basis) and that there is something distinctive about it, which makes it a suitable and informative category to isolate and study. Even in the criticism directed at Gell's work, the value of this approach to aesthetics is recognised, and criticism focuses instead on his use of semiotics (Layton 2003). Gell's work, as well as the critique on it, offer the tools to explain how the concept of aesthetics is used in this project, when it is, and the importance of deploying it in conjunction with an analysis of social and institutional context .

Patterned artefacts can be socially active as part of interactions, and in that social role they can acquire a lot of power, according to Gell's (1998: 5-21) theory of agency. Objects can substitute for social agents, or act as secondary agents in conjunction with human ones, as they become entwined in the same network of social relationships. They are also a medium through which the exercise of agency on the part of humans is visibly manifested in the physical world. Through them, the primary agents can affect and change the causal milieu. This process is reproduced even on the single body of the ornamented artefact, as different parts of the decoration interact with one another and they make it seem alive, as it acquires the dynamic properties of the viewer's perception (Gell 1998: 76-78).

Decorated objects can act as mediators for an agent's intention, something which is closely related to their capacity to attract and attach, as described above (Grabar 1992: 45, 230). Ornament itself can also be an intermediary between the user and the viewer (whose positions are also not fixed) making easier, more enjoyable or

even compelling the access to the object and its use, either through attachment, or by intensifying the pleasure caused by looking at it (attraction in the first sense in which it was used). In many cases, such as the ones mentioned above, we are speaking of decoration as a part of the object, elaborating on it and its purpose and function. In this kind of relationship between the artefact and its decoration, decoration can be said to enhance the artefact in a way that, by emphasising the object and its properties, it makes it more of what it is (Coomaraswamy 1939); so, for example, for an elaborate decorated cup, attention is drawn not just to the physical item but to all its functions, such as containing, or drinking, affecting all the aspects of "cupness". This emphasis can, in the right context, improve the carrier of the object and give a stronger impression of them as well. This is also suggested by the study of personal ornamentation, which can intensify or enlarge the impression of the personality (Simmel 1950: 338-339).

Elaborating decoration and producing value

However, as became clear in the discussion of decoration's definition, enhancement is not the only possible relationship between object and ornament. They can also be detached from one another and act independently. This can be caused, for example, by the excessive complication of the pattern which can drive the viewer to literal distraction and separate decoration from the structure of which it was part, no longer attracting attention to the object but to itself (Gombrich 1979: 206). In this case, the emphasis moves to the appearance, which can take on a life of its own. A possible result might be over-ornamented objects that are created only for the sake of display (Coomaraswamy 1939). However, caution is useful in deciding when appearance is a thing in itself, especially because it is difficult to determine in archaeological deposits, since the reference to purpose might still be present and very important. Another kind of detachment can be the result of mass production and wide distribution of objects, which might separate the form from its original meaning (Staubmann 1997; Riegl 1992: 96).

Decoration can be, in fact, a way to take further properties that material objects can have in general: objects can bring together different things, thoughts, hierarchies, practices and histories, through that one entity, as parts of many spheres of life (Lemonnier 2012: 119-120). Working from that, we can bring together two of

the identified properties of decoration: that of the decorated object as amplified or emphasized, as being more of what it is, and that of decoration working to attach people to objects and the social projects they are part of, adding further to the associations of the object, beyond just emphasizing its properties. Decorated objects can therefore be conceived as an especially efficacious way of doing what materials can do anyway: combine and evoke.

The function of decoration can also be related to its production, which can lead to very different results. On an object of low technological requirements, decoration can be widely disseminated and a medium for the expression of widely held social values (David *et al.* 1988). A highly elaborate and complicated object on the other hand, can be particularly desirable since it offers resistance to its possession (Gell 2006: 163-173), either physically (by being difficult to acquire, for a variety of reasons) or conceptually (by making understanding of how it was created difficult). Simmel presented the idea, further developed by Appadurai (1986: 3-4, 21), that the value of objects is not an inherent property, but situated between the desire for them and the ability to overcome the distance that separates one from them, which is similar to the point made above about resistance. According to Appadurai, the coming into contact of different systems (which is one of the main points of interest of the eastern Mediterranean), is the main way in which values are constituted and negotiated. Another arena where this happens, is what Appadurai calls "tournaments of value", complex episodic events which are distinguished from everyday life and transactions, and opportunities for competition, the mere participation in which is an indication of higher status. Artefacts are, therefore, result of a technical process, which gives them part of their power, not only because it is what created them, but also because the level of awareness the viewer has of it, affects how they perceive the result. These objects can help create or materialise and reinforce inequalities by placing people in unequal positions in relation to them.

Habit is an important factor in learning and the transmission of technical traditions. Psychologically and socially it is easier to modify existing motifs than it is to create new ones (Rawson 1984: 25-28). Learning a design and its execution contributes to the creation of a stable social tradition, and the more complicated it is, the more it depends on precedent. This is particularly true when its production

requires high skills, a large investment of effort and, as happens in the case of pottery, it uses a medium in which correction is difficult after a point. This does not exclude change, which experience shows happens either through natural drift or deliberate modification, but there is a tendency for conventions to continue both in creation and perception, as the same habits are carried from generation to generation (Gombrich 1979: 177-179; Gosselain and Livingstone Smith 2005: 40-43). Changes in pottery-making are also difficult because manufacture relies on forming specific and repetitive motor habits at an early age, which are then hard to break (McGovern 1989: 3-6). The difficulty, and therefore deliberateness of change, makes the assumption that it is meaningful more likely, and leads us to investigate the social conditions with which it might be associated. McGovern makes a distinction between "open" and "closed" societies, which is useful as a way to think about different social structures and as a shorthand grouping together social characteristics, even if it is not an exact description (and definitely not perscription): we can say that the way groups and individuals are structured in some societies is more amenable to change, and therefore "open", than in others (Sillar and Tite 2000). In those structures and points in time where the conditions are right for change, stimulation can come from different sources, such as other traditions or other crafts. Perhaps we can take this argument even further, by using the idea of relative 'openness' and studying the potential of its association with other characteristics of social structure, which would enable or facilitate the practices leading to this description. This not only allows us to avoid seeing openness as an essential characteristic, but also enables us to go to greater interpretative depths.

The perspective of technology studies can be very helpful in approaching decorated pottery as a site of social conflict, tension and negotiation in a way that is less loaded than the explicitly aesthetic perspective (Bijker and Law 1992a: 7-10; Pfaffenberger 1992). This process of negotiation and adaptation is an important part of the mechanism of change, as well as its converse: a technology stabilises when the relationships in which it is involved also stabilise and there are accommodations between the different parts. This is also helpful because, on one hand it allows the development of a concept of non-static stability, and on the other hand it promotes the realisation that stability is as much in need of understanding and theorising and change is — a balance which is needed especially in ceramic contexts, where change

can be prioritised as a choice indicating social development (partly this happens by necessity when ceramic changes are used as a basis for chronological schemes), but stability is often ignored and sidestepped.

Habit and familiarity of appearance can facilitate change by using decoration as a way to make connections between different objects. Connections through direct mimicry is possible, but not all designs work in the same way and they cannot all be transferred to other media, or from one social context to another (Rawson 1984: 25-28). When they are transferred like that, the process requires explanation, both in the way that it happens and in the changes that might take place because of it in the perception of the object and its social uses. This employs analogy, working through decoration by making reference to other materials (Gombrich 1979: 174). The role of this reference or imitation of one material in another, called skeuomorphism (Vickers and Gill 1994: 106), has been especially interrogated in regards to technological change through the history of the concept's use, either as a connecting element easing transition and assisting innovation by making reference to a previously familiar technology, or as an expression of conservatism, representing a claim to continuity.

Skeuomorphism is a major theme in the study of pottery in general and illustrates excellently the subtle interplay between the physical production of an object, its properties, and its investment with value. Decoration can be, along with surface treatment, shaping, and everything that contributes to the creation of the visual and tactile characteristics of an object, one of the ways in which features move between different media. Skeuomorphism is also one of those characteristics whose pervasiveness becomes obvious once it is noticed, but it is always important to examine it more closely, since it can often provide the illusion of an explanation for appearance, while in reality it is one further choice that needs to be interpreted. It is interesting that from the very early history of the term, when coined by Colley March in 1889, skeuomorphism was connected with two issues that we are still grappling with here. It was defined as “those [decorations] derived from structure” (Frieman 2012: 9), identified with the characteristics of structure from one material which are represented in another. This connects skeuomorphism on the one hand with decoration, and on the other with the conflict regarding functionality: the translation of a functional feature, for example a rivet, into one that fulfils no structural

requirement, brings us directly to the debate over identifying the non-functional as decorative (Harrison 2003).

Even more importantly, skeuomorphism has also been connected with the hierarchy of value of different materials, and the role imitation plays in its negotiation (Frieman 2010: 33-37; 2012: 10-11). This is especially relevant to pottery, and the realisation that its relationship with other materials of higher intrinsic value, usually metals, heavily impacts how it was perceived in the past and is studied by us in the present. A skeuomorphic pot following a metal prototype would then refer to the original, and the status it stands for, in its absence. The success of this reference would depend on the degree to which the imitation itself is successful, and when it is not it could perhaps be considered unsuccessful emulation (Knappett 2002). One typical example is the proposition that black- and red-figure Greek Classical pottery follows metallic prototypes (Vickers 1989: 45-59), and its immediate perception as an attack on the elevated place of this decorated pottery in archaeology and history of art. When considering the value of skeuomorphic ceramics, it is useful to keep in mind that this goes beyond the value of the clay, and the pottery vessel can be appreciated for different reasons than a metal vessel, but still appreciated. A cross-cultural survey of the practice can show that the pottery which is most closely associated with metal vessels is of fairly high status and unusual, requiring a high investment of additional effort to produce. For the potter, working from a metal prototype would have required the dedication of skill and time. This would only have been worthwhile if there were some return for it, either in terms of a high enough social appreciation to make it a valuable exchange object or in terms of direct support for an artisan so that they can produce it (Gaiger-Smith 1986: 213-215).

With the above in mind, to whom do skeuomorphic vessels belong, in terms of the social groups that use and desire them? Specifically relevant to the case studies, in Minoan Crete there is an important tradition of skeuomorphism, especially associated with Kamares pottery, but it is useful to outline an initial, more general, range of options. From what we have seen so far, we can suggest for exploration the hypothesis that a large part of society would have been mostly excluded from access to such ceramics, and if it were not, this would have implications for the system of distribution of ceramic products and its openness. In Crete for example, the most

successful imitations come from high elite contexts (see for example the example in Room XXVII in Phaistos, Levi 1964: 3-10), giving the impression that the people who would have access to the metal vessels are the same ones who show interest in their imitation. If, then, we can identify skeuomorphic pottery as of interest to the higher levels of society, should it be identified as an elite product, or as the material playing field of sub-elites, those who have sufficient familiarity with elite culture to be able to recognise and reproduce its markers, and at the same time had the means and motivation to manipulate the material culture they had access to, in order to create a social position for themselves, within the framework of the structure that already existed? The contexts of discovery of metal skeuomorphs suggest two potential observations: firstly, they confirm the cross cultural observation of the investment of effort in such decoration (Gaiger-Smith 1986: 213-215) through their association with those who can support this investment. Secondly, they suggest that the same decorated objects could either be of interest to multiple social group or that the limits between those groups were permeable. Skeuomorphism as an open channel between objects of different materials also offers opportunities for wider access and negotiation of value, which can be used to circumvent or subvert hierarchies, at the same time as sustaining through the implicit acceptance of the same system of value (Knappett, 2002).

The evocations of another material which are inherent in skeuomorphism are therefore, in this approach, not just an imitation, a second-best version of something more desirable, but they also give to the skeuomorphic object a power of its own, both through reference and through the tension they create by creating an experience for the viewer and user which includes both similarities and differences with the imitated medium, and the expectations that the user can form about its uses (Frieman 2012: 11-13). As I have discussed in this section, tensions and subtle discordances such as these are important in the way decoration affects us, and can be steered towards the delight of engaging with the object as an amalgam or as a puzzle to be unravelled (Foster 1989: 31), rejection of its similarity to something it is not, or a recognition of the magic-like power that went into the object's making, and which gives it potency and desirability, since it evades understanding, as Gell says of certain kinds of decoration.

In many ways, we can say that the problems of skeuomorphism are the problems of decoration itself, which gives us two reasons to study it: both because of the frequency with which it is identified in the region of study, and because it can clarify issues about the way decoration is put to work in general. Skeuomorphism also touches upon another factor that affects the perception and study of decoration: the moral overtones the discussion can take, which have already been mentioned for decoration in general. Copying in a different material can have implications of deceit and "fakeness" (Raby and Vickers 1986: 217-221). This often pushes the identification of the skeuomorphism into the territory of judgement, and to assumptions about value: a cup with a metal appearance, for example, can be conceived as a fake metal cup, rather than an elaborate ceramic one, obscuring the added value incorporated in the object through the comparison with the inherent value of the original.

Simple decoration and its unconscious effects

A special category, and a very interesting question, is the decorated commonplace artefact, when the practice of decoration becomes widespread. In earlier writings, it has been proposed that the peculiar nature of each civilization is revealed in ornamentation (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951; Frankfort 1924: 15). The "peculiar nature of each civilization" might be beyond our grasp in this study, but there are still many things to be learned from this specific, everyday, use of decoration. Simple decoration on pottery is so frequent that it forces the discussion to go beyond display and competition, the contexts which seem to dominate the theoretical literature. Archaeologists have identified simple decoration as an area where conscious engagement might have been lower, and from a practical point of view, this can be used to offer information for contexts such as production and interaction, for which there are no deliberate traces but those that are unwittingly left behind, such as gestures, or the way brushstrokes are applied (Hegmon 1998: 277; Maguire 2009: 35). Beyond that, this lower threshold of conscious attention can be part of larger structures which play important social roles. This brings us back to Gombrich, bringing his observations about everyday objects together with the archaeological evidence for pottery as a highly flexible material, the level of investment in which can vary greatly. According to his framework, when an ornament is appropriate to its context, it can move to the background and be practically invisible. In that sense,

decoration is noticeable when it is deliberately elaborate enough to demand attention, otherwise discordant, or in the gap its absence leaves (Miller 1985: 139-140; 191-194). It is in position to operate from the margins of consciousness, as a completely natural part of the everyday material setting.

This process of naturalisation is important to engage with when discussing decoration explicitly, because it means that it can be effective, both in showing us distinctions, and in subtly reinforcing or creating the conditions for specific ways for the society to operate. However, it also means that since the material was, in some cases, invisible to its users and producers, we are essentially on our own in trying to get from that to the structure of society. It is a delicate balance between seeing from the distance what would not have been visible close-up, and at the same time not straying far from the range of possibilities the observed patterning of material culture defines. In many cases therefore, decorated everyday vessels might not be the carriers of explicit messages and symbols of ideas, but instead are part of creating a frame in which symbols can participate, of a spread of auspicious paraphernalia.

Another useful idea to incorporate in thinking about decorated objects in everyday life, as part of its framing, is that of enlivenment, the process through which goods are given meaning as a part of social life – a process which can materialise, and be archaeologically detected, it the decorative emphasis placed on the object and its surroundings (Skuse 2005). This idea of everyday decoration as a 'spread' or a setting is important for thinking about many of the cases of pottery that we will examine. Additionally, the appearance of objects which are involved in daily life, and that partly structure it, is especially relevant to the concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1977: 72-95; Hegmon 1998: 277), and therefore to the ways that people move in their everyday worlds, and how these change around them in response to their actions, both conscious and unconscious. Objects can be used to represent materially, permanently, and solidly, a vision desired social configuration, and they are easier to manipulate and make part of a material statement than people who might be familiar with acting through the framework of their social structure, and therefore with how to subvert it. At the same time, people experience social organisation through their daily life via objects — they can live it without necessarily deliberately thinking about it, by creating the appropriate space and context for a certain kind of social life (Lemonnier

2012:14-15; Pfaffenberger 1992). Pottery can therefore give information on social structures as they are, as well as what its makers and users want it to be. If we want to get closer to seeing this complex of social structure, the changes in it and the human actors, objects such as simple decorated pottery are a fruitful avenue of approach to possibilities that this kind of decoration might offer, how it differs in a comparative setting, and how it changes through time or interaction.

I will close this discussion by raising one further issue, concerning the validity of a separation of elaborate and simple everyday decoration. Should these be considered different scales of the same phenomenon, points along a continuum, or fundamentally different aspects of the large and varied potential of decoration? And furthermore, since we can identify such a wide range of possible functions of decoration, is it really meaningful at this point to say that decoration can be used in multiple ways in different contexts? It seems vague and unsatisfactory, yet at the same time it is true. The opposite, the drawing of a stricter distinction between different kinds of decoration, the elaborate and the simple, and their study as separate categories, while seemingly more specific, would actually obscure opportunities to bring together different parts of life and interrogate the meaning of aspects of the same material being employed at different levels, and what that means.

This is why it is difficult to capture the complexity of real world life, even when a sophisticated theoretical point of view is in place and good data are available. This multiplicity however cannot be avoided, because it is grounded in an essential property of material culture, namely to create simultaneous references to numerous and varied domains of social life and types of social relations (Lemonnier 2012: 99). To avoid the pitfalls of vagueness, this study is not going to be grounded in the artificial division of categories (although there is a place for it, from an analytical point of view, in order to show more clearly that multiplicity, understand the content of those heuristic categories and even demonstrate how they cross-cut), but rather in the specificity of the case studies examined in context, which show more precisely how simple and complex decoration differ, how each changes and how they are connected.

Chapter 3. Methods and approaches to the study of pottery

Chapter 3 is dedicated to placing this work in a Mediterranean context of pottery studies, and laying out the methodology adopted, on the basis of past literature, regarding the selection and study of the material. The study of pottery occupies an ambiguous position in archaeology, caught between the classical/art historical inheritance of admiration, specifically of decorated pottery, and the backlash to that, which emphasizes the low value of the material. It is important to understand the place and influence of those research approaches, without losing sight of the unique potential that the study of pottery still offers. Our focus on pottery might be disproportionate to the attention it received at the time of its use (Skibo 1999: 1-2), but this does not mean that focus on pottery is misdirected. It is exactly because it is an everyday material and because it is present in the lives of the majority of the population from all walks of life that we can learn so much from it, and use it to examine the cross-section of multiple social groups, especially those that made up the majority of the population (Merrillees 1974: 13). Interestingly, this ambivalence towards pottery is not restricted to those who study it from a temporal distance, but is a feature that has been observed in ethnographic research. For example, in Miller's study of Dangwara pottery in India (Miller 1985), he notices that pottery plays an indispensable part in ceremonies, especially weddings, in which it can even stand as a representation of the whole event. At the same time, the local population was reluctant to offer explanations about this phenomenon and did not seem to understand the dedication of so much attention to a material like pottery.

The practice of studying pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean

Before discussing the questions raised by the focus on the study of decorated pottery and the methods I employed in dealing with them, it is useful first to see those in a wider context of past and current pottery studies in the eastern Mediterranean. This thesis is partly the intellectual descendent of that research, works through it, and is influenced by its conclusions. I am starting this overview from the Aegean, a region I especially emphasize in this section, because pottery has long been a subject of particular preoccupation and conscious attention there, holding a contradictory place in research. Cyprus, Egypt and the Levant follow, with a focus on the particularities of each (especially those that might affect research) and the exploration of the common theme of wares and how they are employed.

Since the 1970s, one current of research followed an approach that could be described as art historical and had strong links to Classical archaeology. From this point of view, decorated pottery acquired an intrinsic value in the past, as a highly prized object, and in the present, as something deserving of attention and display based on its appearance (Sherratt 2011: 260-261). This perspective was not as strong as in Classical archaeology, but it did affect attitudes towards painted pottery. These can often be seen in the description of the pottery changes over the periods, which usually focus on the most elaborate styles and terms indicating value judgements, which often creep in, describing changes through peaks and declines or speaking of degeneration (see for example Betancourt 1985: 103;[1] Mountjoy 1993: 91[2]). Through this language and point of view, decorated pottery is separated from the "merely functional" and becomes something luxurious and non-utilitarian, carrying important value at its time of use as well as in the present. This "art historical" approach to pottery with its Classical ties never completely went away, as can be seen by the inclusion of the material in works on Aegean art (Betancourt 2007). [3]

This approach was followed by a backlash in the 1990s, when the actual importance of pottery was questioned. This arose partly out of studies of the role it held in trade, which arrived to the conclusion that it moved either as a container or as

[1] "…much of the ceramics of MM III represent a surprising and still unexplained recession in both style and technology"
[2] "The decoration of LH IIIC Early vases is rather boring; it is mostly linear."
[3] "A few MM IIIA vases reflect the increasingly important art of landscape painting" (Betancourt 2007: 85)

a small and unimportant component of the process (Sherratt 1999: 164-167). The examination of pottery in trade had multiple effects, in addition to the doubts it introduced about the value of pottery for the people that used it. It also introduced new issues, such as the differences in use and reception of the same material in different cultural contexts, which became important for later studies (for example van Wijngaarden 1999: 21-34), including the present one. This devaluing trend also re-introduced some interesting concepts that had previously fallen out of use, such as skeuomorphism, which was analysed in detail in the previous chapter. It was suggested that pottery, being of low importance but particularly amenable to alterations, is especially likely to be influenced by the materials of higher status and mimic their appearance, something which, from a non-ceramic perspective, also makes it a valuable source of information on objects that are often not preserved, especially metals. This shift did not only affect Bronze Age archaeology, but the same ideas were also applied to the study of Classical pottery, the reverence for which was a great influence on how earlier decorated pottery was perceived (Vickers and Gill 1994).

One observation following from this is that the "art historical" current of pottery study would not have been possible at all if there was not so much elaborately decorated pottery made and used in the Bronze Age Aegean. There might have been important flaws in the Classical-influenced approach, but it was based on a combination of factors, including the prevalence of decorated pottery, whose actual importance remains to be addressed. The comparative approach becomes particularly useful at this context. It is interesting that those studying the region have not, until recently, treated this emphasis on decoration in the Aegean context, and particularly in Crete, as an anomaly. Partly the reason for this is the lack of a comparative perspective in Aegean studies, alongside the expectation that since later Greek pottery is 'naturally' decorated, so is Bronze Age pottery. It is perhaps also the result of a very large corpus of pottery, a large part of it from early excavations with little context or information on stratigraphy, which directed the study of pottery towards questions that would help with the organization of this material.

Decorated pottery, having gone through the reverential phase, having been classified, re-evaluated and dethroned, can now be approached in a more nuanced way, which understands and takes advantage of the unique properties of this material, to see it as a category of material culture that is the site of social negotiation and

conflict. This approach, to which my research can be said to belong, is becoming increasingly common. Decoration is only part of the issue. Other aspects of ceramics, such as manufacture technology (Crewe 2007; 2012; Whitelaw *et al.* 1997: 265-273) have also been investigated as the arena of expression of social affiliations and identification, through which components of the society might materially separate or align themselves with others (Broodbank and Kiriatzi 2007: 246-247; Knappett 1999). In Sherratt's work (1999), the subversive powers of pottery are also noted and emphasized, once again set in the context of trade, a type of contact which has the property, through juxtaposition, to bring out observations about the material, and its similarities and differences, that would otherwise not have been as immediately perceived. Comparative research gives us the opportunity to do conceptually what trade does physically, and the Mediterranean is the perfect ground to bring the two together.

According to Sherratt, this new understanding of pottery's position has two components, the economic and the social. In terms of economics, it is important to understand the part that pottery plays as a product, and the processes of its production and consumption. Given the large quantities of pottery moving between regions, and how much of our information on trade it makes up (regardless of whether its part in ancient transactions was as important as the survival of the material make it to us), ignoring pottery, even of lower value, would be shortsighted. The social component is heavily intertwined with the above, for example with demand, and the market for a material such a decorated pottery, and therefore the incentive for it to move around different areas — or even the deliberate creation of a niche for it. Recognising this potential in decorated pottery allows us to see the roles that it can adopt in social life, especially, according to Sherratt's argument, by establishing a dialogue with elite materials and practices and in the long term undermining hierarchical institutions through the flexibility of these negotiations, often through the activity of sub-elite groups, of intermediate social status and resources (Schoep 2010: 74-81; Sherratt 1999: 185-187). This aspect of the study of Mediterranean pottery has been extremely influential in shaping my attitude towards it, as expressed for instance in the theoretical framework I outlined in the previous chapter. To conclude, this trend of work on ceramics in the Mediterranean reinforces the association made in the previous chapter between decorated pottery, its potential in social negotiation and an openness in social structure. The investigation of this association in a deeper way and

the study of the specific forms it takes is at the core of this project, and a dominant theme throughout all chapters that follow.

Apart from the broader perspective on the place of pottery in Mediterranean archaeology, there are also specific issues in the way this material has been studied in each of the eastern Mediterranean macro-regions beyond the Aegean that affect how we see them and what we can say about it. These particularities and region-specific questions will be especially highlighted in the chapter that follows, which presents the broad, comparative view of ceramic development. To briefly introduce some of them here, there is, in most parts of the Eastern Mediterranean, a common emphasis on typology, which has already been mentioned, and pottery is usually a source of information on chronology and the contacts between different areas, decoration often acting as one of the main bases of categorization and sources of information. By describing these in the beginning, it is easier to understand the impact of the separate systems of classification, which needs to be dealt with in the methodology section, in order to create a more unified perspective for comparative purposes.

In Cyprus, a very elaborate system is in place based on "wares", variably defined but generally understood as a combination of technological, geographical and surface treatment features. Their identification has a lot to do with the research history of the island and they are occasionally accompanied by Roman numerals, which might identify chronological sequence, regional, or stylistic differences, as for example in White Painted Ware (Maguire 1991: 59; Merrillees 1978: 14-25). As we will see, this still-evolving system is hopefully reaching a phase of wider consensus between specialists, and it can be productively modified for our purposes. The Levantine systems are also ware-based, categories that are often especially associated with decorated pottery, such as Levantine Painted Ware or Syro-Cilician Painted Ware. These similarly suffer from issues of definition and delineation of groups. Recent work on these has included efforts on cross-regional synchronisation, as well as calls for a more neutral terminology (Bagh 2002: 89; Nigro 2002a).

Meanwhile, in Egypt a wholly different approach has been adopted, due to a distinct history of research in the area. The early emphasis on written sources meant that in the case of Egypt, the system of pottery study was only developed in the 1960s, much later than in any of the surrounding areas. The approach to ceramic study in Egypt has two poles. The first is the fundamental distinction between the two clay types used in the Nile Valley, which leads to a distinction between Silt fabrics and

Marl fabrics. This fabric-based approach is unique in the Eastern Mediterranean (Bourriau *et al.* 2000). The wider fabric groups are further subdivided into types according to a system of classification known as the Vienna System. The second is the way shapes are integrated in the study of pottery, often as a much more central organising principle. Some archaeologists working in the field in Egypt prefer the use of mathematical formulae in vessel descriptions, in order to avoid the implications of common language terms, defining the vessel's characteristics according to a series of indexes such as the aperture and the maximum body diameter. The index-based method is widely used in publication (Rose 2007: 8; Bourriau 2010: 11), and it can be extended by the use of conventional terms, some very distinctive types with their own terms or with the naming of shape according to function, actual or conventional. Type is usually the most specific step in the classification of a vessel, defined as the combination of a ware with a particular shape, bringing together all the elements used in the characterisation. These idiosyncrasies result in challenges in integrating Egyptian results with those from other regions. Finally, since the study of pottery is evolving in different ways in Egypt, this results in different practices than in the surrounding regions. For example, the refinement of an understanding of the relationship between the composition of pottery assemblages and the dating of settlement sites is still in process, due to the long neglect of that potential of pottery, leading to a continuing need for pottery corpora in publications.

The study of pottery in the Levant is heavily focused on the identification of 'wares'. We have encountered wares already in Egypt and in Cyprus, and in each occasion the meaning of the term is very different: while in one region they might signify a consistent combination of fabric and surface treatment (Egypt) in another they are used as an organizing principle to build an overall ceramic typology (Cyprus) or the word is even used very loosely to signify ceramic style or type (Aegean). In the Levant, wares are in a somewhat intermediate state. They are not part of a system applied across the board, and neither are they specifically defined and applied. Instead, some aspects of ceramic practice are selected, an element of similarity and distinctiveness is identified by specialists about them, and they are designated as a "ware". This has had an impact on the study of pottery, focusing research goals away from the assessment of overall assemblages and instead favouring isolation of types.

Demonstrating and ranking difference

In order to group pottery in an informative way on the basis of decoration, and to connect this organization of the material to how the investment of effort manifested on it, and therefore draw reliable connections to society and pottery's place in it, we need to establish a reliable way of measuring elaboration. A brief examination of different potential associations from the archaeological and anthropological literature on ceramics shows that it would be very difficult to argue for the presence of universals, and at the same time shows a range of options for how people can use decorated pottery. Despite the back and forth on the place of ceramics in ancient society and whether this has been overvalued or undervalued in current research, a wide potential exists, both for the elaboration of the material, and for its place in social estimation and use. It is the enormous flexibility of clay as a material and the very loose limits it places that permits it in different cases to occupy different positions in that range, often in the same society (Stark 1999: 137-138).

Extreme cases can be especially informative, such as when they involve an explicit ranking of materials, as in 14th-16th century AD south-central India (Sinopoli 1999: 115-119). In that case, ceramic vessels were not considered clean, because of their characteristic of permeability. They were therefore undervalued and not deemed suitable for public feasting, gifting or display. Seeing what kind of decoration accompanies this specific perspective is interesting from our point of view (Sinopoli 1999: 120). In this case, there was minimal surface treatment of pottery vessels, and decoration was either absent or very simple (Sinopoli 1999: 125). This shows a potential relationship between low instances of decoration and a low investment in and status of pottery, but it is important to note that this relationship is neither universal nor does the relationship necessarily work if the argument is reversed. In this case the low decoration/low status association is also connected to a highly structured hierarchical society. However, it is also possible to have hierarchical societies where pottery is highly valued and elaborately decorated, as in Classic Maya (Stark 1999: 138-139). This shows that the devaluation of pottery and its lack of decoration are not a natural consequence of the properties of clay as material (its prevalence and potential low cost) but a choice that some societies make but not others, always in conversation with the other materials used for vessels, prompting the question as to why.

Efforts have been made to quantify differences in the quality of pottery in order to assess them, and the impact they have on production and consumption, more accurately. The role of skill in this process is difficult to quantify, even as we understand the significance of its impact on the finished product. The investment of labour in the construction of a pot is an often-used alternative criterion, which is especially tempting for many reasons: firstly because it is measurable, at least in approximate terms, secondly because it has an objective impact, and lastly because it has a very important advantage of not focusing only on the finished product of the vessel, but seeing it as something that incorporates the whole process of its creation, and can take into account a fuller range of changes and alternatives. In the question of the value of pottery, and what, if anything, decoration contributes to it, other factors come into play as well. The incorporation of the labour investment in the value of the finished product is not a direct transfer of the energy invested, and instead it depends on other, intermediate factors. We can say, therefore, about decorated pottery that whether and how the labour in the "added value" is valued depends on the place of the person who carries it out, the way the object is distributed and whether it is recognised by the final consumer (Miller 1985:115-120).

Beyond the measure of how elaborate a vessel is, there is also the question of how to evaluate the significance of pottery as a category in a society- is it something that has the potential of being used in social display, and is this display hierarchical or not? As the examples cited above show, high levels of decoration are an initial (if not sufficient) indication of social significance. Other archaeological signatures can begin pointing us towards specific directions. Spatial patterning for example is significant: rarity and indications of restricted access can be connected with restrictions to certain segments of society (Stark 1999: 140,155). Spatial patterning can also differ between an even distribution, a differential or an exclusive one. Patterning is also very important in establishing that there are differences in the context of use, and in avoiding imposing preconceived notions on the material. It is preferable to start with the examination of contexts (either in the sense of specific contexts in the case studies, or through the more descriptive approach that has been adopted in the broader comparative chapters), and, once a difference, such as a specific patterning, is recognised, then go on to interpret it, rather than relying on the identification of decontextualised variation which might or might not be meaningful, relevant or even real.

Methods of study

Attempting to understand the incorporation of value into pottery through the elaboration of decoration has methodological implications for the treatment of the material. In the previous chapter, I arrived at a definition of decoration that includes any vessel on whose surface conscious patterning was created. This definition, which draws a line around the general category, can now be enriched through the introduction of scaling, to arrive at a more refined analysis of decorated vessels, beyond inclusion or exclusion. As I discussed above, one especially appealing way of estimating complexity is based on the estimation of effort invested, in the form of labour input, and the time it reflects. Approaches such as the Production Step Measure, introduced by Feinman *et al.* (1981; 1984: 308-310), and the methods related to it, such as the assignment of points on the basis of production tasks (Costin and Hagstrum 1995) are using precisely this idea. These approaches are very practical, because they assist in making essentially qualitative distinctions, but organizing them in ordinal categories that make analysis and comparison using quantitative aspects, such as sherd counts, much easier. They are also useful for linking ideas such as time invested, ceramic complexity levels and relative costs. They are meant to be a rough indication, and not a complete guide, and used as such they can be very useful.

The categorization that I have adopted in this project is heavily influenced by this way of looking at the material. This scheme focuses on categories of surface treatments, in order to correspond with the aims of the research project. Manufacture methods are usually uniform, but when they are not (in which case they also need to be factored in the comparison) they will be examined on a case by case basis. The categories were initially designed during the study of sherd material from Knossos, and the level of detail they express can often not be assessed when I rely on published data (the sources and handling of data will be discussed at the end of in this chapter). These classes are roughly in "ranked" order, in order to reflect the range of possible choices, as well as the effort expenditure that went into their creation and their elaboration and potential for display.

The categories start from a completely untreated surface, continuing to Smoothed/slipped, Burnished/polished and Monochrome. This is the cut-off point for the categories classified as "undecorated", while the decorated ones are Trickle/splatter, Banded, Relief/Incised, Rope/Thumb impressions, Geometric and Representational. The Banded, Geometric and Representational categories were further divided into Simple/Complex and Monochrome/Polychrome categories. As I mentioned, these were initially developed in the context of Knossian pottery, but the labels were intentionally broadened so that these categories can be globally applicable throughout the case studies, wherever assessment has been possible on the basis of publications. In the course of the case studies these were shown to be sufficient to cover the full range of decoration encountered Additionally, locally significant categories were used wherever necessary, such as Barbotine for Minoan Crete, grouped with the Relief categories, and further refinement could be added on occasion: for example, the emphasis in the use of incision in the MC period necessitated the division of that category into Simple and Complex. In order to define a measure for elaborate decoration for this study, I drew a line including all Polychrome decoration, Representational decoration and Complex decoration, with the exception of Banded. This system is not perfect, but it should allow for comparison between contexts and periods.

Assignation to categories was still to some degree a matter of personal judgment. This additional factor can also be seen in previous efforts to measure and categorize ceramic complexity, as well as in the sub-categories adopted here, and it is necessary to acknowledge it and make it explicit. The estimation of the effort and time invested in the final product is not sufficient to truly evaluate decorative elaboration. A subjective factor is always present, and this is recognised by the inclusion, for example, of a separate "Painting- complex design" category by Feinman *et al.* (1981), and the distinction of simple and complex motifs by Costin and Hagstrum (1995), as well as the addition of a point for "noteworthy skill" in the second scheme.

Having laid out the framework that I will apply to the study of the material, the question is how this material is to be selected, no longer in terms of whether it belongs to the category of "decorated" or not, but in the broader sense of its origins: that is, how are sites selected for closer scrutiny in the context of the case studies. This is closely connected to the comparative methodology adopted here, which I will

return to at the end of this section as I bring everything together. The combination of the overview and the comparative approach leads to the identification of areas and times of particular interest, and I approach each of these as a distinct unit when it comes to the selection of sites.

There are two main criteria I follow within the confines of each region. The first is to ensure that the examples I study cover a sufficient range of sites, in terms of geographical distribution and of social characteristics of the site: for example sizes of different sites, or those that are associated with institutions such as palaces as well as those that are not. The second, which impinges on every other aspect, is publication quality: the sites for which more ceramic information is available are prioritised by necessity. I am aware of the dangers of a slightly skewed impression arising from that, and this risk is also assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The next step following the choice of a site for study is the appropriate use of the sources of ceramic data from each. The possibilities are to some degree dictated by the archaeological history of each area, both in regard to what areas have been investigated, when, how and how fully they were published, but also because different regional archaeologies have different questions to ask of pottery and it is therefore organised along different principles and described and published in different ways. With this partial restriction as a given, I have tried to use the available sources to their fullest potential, including partial information. I draw therefore on diverse sources: full site publications, preliminary reports published as monographs or articles, general works on sites, illustrations and research on issues affecting the area of study.

The deepest level of detail, however, comes from the Stratigraphic Museum at Knossos, where I had the opportunity to study in person pottery assemblages covering the entire second millennium BC. This confrontation with the material led to the development of methodologies in categorisation which were adopted across the board, as I described above. The specific approach to the material from Knossos was distinctive enough to merit a separate discussion, which constitutes a part of the relevant chapter. Beyond the assistance with categorization and a robust sample, the sample from the Stratigraphic Museum also provided methodological control for issues which are inevitable at a study of this scale, and especially those relating to the extraction of quantifiable information from sherd assemblages.

Although primary assemblages made up of complete vessels are the ideal, as I will describe, a restriction to this kind of deposit would be extremely limiting, and for

the majority of cases not possible, while most publications provide sherd counts, facilitating comparison and providing a broad base of data (Broodbank 2007: 132). As a part of processing the Knossian material, it was possible to break the sherds down into categories by size and fabric, both categories that affect quantification (Orton 1993). Following that, the results of the analysis of relatively homogeneous categories made up of fine sherds of the same size range could be compared with the information from published deposits, and lead to the conclusion that the information from sherd counts was reliable for the purposes of this study.

Finally, in the Stratigraphic museum I also had the chance to study reconstructed vessels and record the sherds that they were originally made up of. This indicated that for most categories of vessels with decoration covering the body of the vessel, there are good chances of decoration being present at every sherd, and therefore being correctly identified, with the disadvantage of different parts being assigned to different categories. Decoration percentages based on sherd counts can, then, be considered representative, in broad terms, for many decorative schemes and for fine and smaller sized vessels. There are two exceptions to that observation: The first is vessels where decoration is concentrated on the rim or the top thirds of the vessel as happens for example for Blue Painted pottery at its later phases. This is not an issue when publication focuses on rim sherds (which is common in many publications used as sources, and standard practice in the Levant), but in other cases, quantities of decoration should be considered slight underestimates. The second issue is medium-sized closed vessels which have a larger overall surface, but frequently only a couple of bands or a trickle of decoration. Quantities of decoration for these, therefore, can also be considered underestimates when based on sherds. This is clearly demonstrated in Crete, where the MM II studied sample from the Stratigraphic Museum gave a rate of decoration of c. 10% for semicoarse sherds, while contemporary deposits of complete vessels from Malia show decoration percentages of above 50% for all samples studied. However, even data with known biases are extremely useful, especially when compared with other assemblages which are subject to the same biases, as Chapter 5 in particular will show.

In published information, when detailed statistical information is available this is the preferred source of data (as in MacDonald and Knappett 2007). In cases where complete floor or destruction deposits were published in a catalogue, including all whole or restorable vases, these were also used as a source of quantitative information

(see for example Knappett and Cunningham 2003). While sometimes they do not represent the entirety of the assemblage, they were not subject to selection on the basis of surface treatment and are therefore good sources of information and comparable at least to similarly published deposits (Appendix A). In the examination and analysis of contexts, description always includes the nature of the deposit, whether it is primary or secondary and how it was created. This is important in assessing the information that can be extracted from the quantification, particularly in relation to the relative frequencies of different shapes. These break and are discarded at different rates (Orton *et al.* 1993: 166-167; 205-209), resulting in different compositions for accumulated deposits and those originating from a destruction that preserve an assemblage as it was stored or used.

On the basis of detailed information from the publications as described above, the initial piece of information to be extracted, wherever possible, is the overall percentage of decorated pottery. Following that, decorated pottery is broken down by shape, if this information is available, and a secondary distinction is also made using the decoration categories. Shape, if not determined by the publication, is identified using general categories, also developed further for the study of sherd material in Knossos, which distinguishes between small open, medium open, small closed, medium closed and storage vessels, and which also broadly correspond to functional categories. The general categorisation of decoration is followed to the degree that the approach of each publication allows, and even when it cannot be fully applied, it still assists significantly with creating comparable results across the disparate local classificatory schemes, something which will be seen very clearly in the study of Cyprus, for example. Selective pottery catalogues, including only 'diagnostic', 'interesting' and 'characteristic' pottery, or intended as a full corpus of the types of pottery found on the site (depending on each excavator's definition on type), were used cautiously as a more general source of information. Very detailed publications in combination with a broader overview of the developments in the area provide a framework in which other pieces of information can fit in order to complete the picture.

Having now gone over the particulars of the material, what remains to be discussed is how the range of material that is studied through them is going to be brought together and be part of a coherent and informative whole. I have already discussed more generally the value of the comparative approach and how it can be

especially informative in the case of pottery to reveal the range of choices regarding the decoration of pottery and the variety of social configurations with which these are associated. With this potential in mind, and the goal of producing a diverse but integrated study, I have adopted a threefold approach.

The first step, and the broadest one, is a long term comparative overview of the development of different pottery traditions through time in the Eastern Mediterranean, considering the changes in decorated pottery as well as its presence or absence and the intensity and constancy of that presence, presented in Chapter 4. Through this comparison at a broad resolution differences become particularly clear, and this is helpful in identifying anomalies in the general patterns, areas with more consistent differences of trajectory, or interesting oppositions and patterns calling for comparison: crucial points in time and space where there is a change in pottery inviting interpretation, or social changes whose potential effect on ceramics can be assessed and whose broad patterns were outlined in Chapter 1. These cases are especially informative about the particularities in the use of decoration and offer the opportunity to study it in context. This leads us to the second step, of detailed case studies carried out in Chapters 5 to 8, where I analyse and compare specific assemblages in context, following the methods already outlined in detail. This detailed work is in a recursive relationship with the wider comparative perspective, with the cases selected on the basis of that, and the specifics informing the bigger picture and how it is viewed.

Finally, the third part of the approach is possible because of the characteristics of interregional interaction in the context of the Eastern Mediterranean, which were part of the reason it was selected as the wider region of study. As I have shown in the introduction, the areas that make up the Eastern Mediterranean do not only develop in comparable conditions, but are also in contact with one another, with an intensity that increases at the second millennium progresses. This allows us to use these relations to look into the similarities and differences of comparison in a new way, by studying for example the co-existence of material from different origins in the same location, interacting with one another as well as the distribution and reception of decorated pottery in a foreign social context, which plays an important part in Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 4. The ceramic world of second millennium eastern Mediterranean: going beyond typologies

Introduction

This chapter serves a dual aim in the context of the thesis: at the most basic level it builds up the context of the research by exploring the characteristics of pottery and its decoration in the macro-regions of the eastern Mediterranean, identifying the main archaeological questions concerning these and following how pottery and its production has changed through time. Laying out this ceramic world is essential before progressing to more detailed studies, in order to understand the broader whole of which they are a part. The second aspect of the chapter builds on the nature of ceramics and the comparison between them, and takes the research further and deeper than a simple overview: this is the first opportunity to carry out comparative research, in this case at the broader level. Based only on this simpler information it is possible to identify emerging patterns simply by placing the developments in different regions next to one another, while at the same time keeping in mind the observations made in the introductory chapter about the societal developments in the macro-regions of the eastern Mediterranean.

Through comparative research at this level, it is possible to identify what is distinctive about pottery decoration in each macro-region, to set out hypotheses and avenues for exploration and to make crucial connections between pottery and society. These three elements together are what leads to the next step, and they constitute the basis for the in depth exploration of the case studies, at the same time as situating the detailed studies in their material and social context.

Egypt

As noted earlier, the development of ceramic simplicity in Egypt has been central to identifying the associations between mass production, lack of decoration and the creation of a centralized, highly hierarchical political structure. Now, looking closer at these developments, it is time to start complicating the picture, initially by nuancing the idea of absence of pottery decoration, and understanding the potential behind the complication. Specifically, we can study under what conditions decoration increases in such a strongly stratified context based on the pattern of the emergence of highly

decorated styles in that context, and see when and where else in the eastern Mediterranean these patterns appear.

Despite the lack of decorative emphasis, various minor, often simpler, ways of decoration are a nearly constant feature in second millennium Egypt (Schiestl and Seiler 2012). Incised decoration was used, especially in 12th Dynasty Upper Egypt and continues into the Second Intermediate Period. This technique has been associated with the country's African heritage (Arnold *et al.* 1993: 90) but it is common in the Levant as well, and perhaps in Egypt it expresses the interplay of the ideas and influences of these two traditions to the North and South of the country. It can be combined with very fine calcareous clay, creating "Qena ware", a category of drinking bowls and jars representing higher investment (see fig. 4.1)(Arnold *et. al* 1978: 132). Another intriguing use of incisions is on the bottom and sides of handmade coarse oval dishes, which can depict elaborate plants and fish, giving the impression of a pond (Bader 2002). They are found in settlements such as Qau and Kahun (see fig. 4.2) and the husks of grain that have been found in the incisions have led to the suggestion that they functioned as bread moulds. This means that the decoration was not restricted to the vessel but transferred to the loaf baked in it, giving a hint of perishable elements of decoration in everyday life (Bourriau 1981: 65).

The connections of Egypt and the Levant through incised decoration are particularly visible in Tell el-Yahudiyeh pottery (see fig. 4.3), mostly juglets produced from the 13th Dynasty onwards in the Levant as well as the northeastern Delta (Arnold *et al.* 1993:91). Simple painted decoration such as stripes, rim bands or drips and splashes was also occasionally used in the Middle Kingdom (Bourriau 1981: 68-69). There are regional differences in style in Egypt, but little research has been carried out on them. The exception is the Second Intermediate Period, when variation becomes more pronounced, and it is difficult to ignore the association of this with the weakening of central power and the introduction of non-Egyptian elements in the region. In fact this diversification continues into the New Kingdom, until the reigns of Hatsepsut and Tuthmosis III, after which differences are suppressed in favour of projecting a unified "Egyptian" appearance (Aston 2013: 379). In the SIP in general, incised and applied decoration is more common than before and painting is also used,

with reddish-brown or black straight, diagonal or crossing lines and simple rim bands. Occasionally even plants and birds are depicted, under the influence of intense relations with the Levant (Hope 2001: 37-38).

In the early New Kingdom, a kind of painted decoration with brown and red paint appears in Upper Egypt (see fig. 4.4), usually linear in combination with simple decorative elements, but also including some pictorial examples of flowers or horses, still under the influence of the close Levantine contacts which built up in the previous period (Lacovara et. al 1982: 77; Arnold et. al 1993: 99-100). We see, therefore, that the spike in elaborate pottery decoration that is just about to appear did not come out of nowhere: the sequence we have followed so far is a low-grade presence of decoration, showing some pre-existing interest, which is stimulated by the flexibility and sustained exposure to different practices in the SIP, after which, in the early New Kingdom, a more rich and varied material world is constructed, including imported ideas and practices in multiple materials, such as glass. Once the New Kingdom is fully established and archaeologists have associated certain types with it, it will appear as a self-contained complex of material that developed abruptly, but a diachronic view raises interesting possibilities about its roots.

The style most identified with pottery decoration in the New Kingdom, and the subject of an in-depth case study in Chapter 6, is Blue Painted pottery[4] (see fig. 4.5), for which a cobalt pigment is used, combined with red and black for details. The most common motifs are floral, especially chains of lotus flowers, leaves and buds, often on the wide necks of funnel-necked jars, some of which combine almost all the techniques of painting, incision, moulding and applied three-dimensional elements. It is also interesting to see when this type of pottery appears: not only does it follow a slow but constant increase in decorated pottery, but it is also a part of a period projecting richness, colour and variety in all materials and areas of life (Peck 2013: 129-130). In its later phases this style becomes simpler and is often restricted to blue bands. Polychrome pottery (see fig. 4.6), usually found in funerary contexts, is also produced in the 19th and 20th Dynasties with colours added on a white ground post-firing (the practice of post-firing decoration surfaces in Egypt from time to time and

[4] This is often referred to as Blue Painted ware. The term "ware" is used in Egypt as well, but in this case with a stricter methodological definition, usually referring to a specific combination of fabric and surface treatment

had a previous flare-up at the end of the SIP), typically depicting a floral collar (Arnold *et. al* 1993: 95-98; Hope 2001: 34-37).

To briefly connect Egypt with the themes of 'decline' that arise at the end of the Bronze Age, at the end of the New Kingdom, Bourriau (1981: 73) identifies a decrease in the quality of pottery and an absence of fresh ideas in decoration. A more detailed look, however, nuances this impression. Decoration is definitely simplified (see fig. 4.7) but it still exists, with subtle variations and a lively connection with the Levant, particularly seen on pilgrim flasks (see fig. 4.8). The latest securely dated Blue Painted examples, with a very limited repertoire of motifs, are found in the tomb of Ramesses IV and the polychrome pottery also stops around the same time. Yet pottery is not left completely plain. Monochrome red painted decoration on a Silt fabric is very common, the red slipped rim is almost universal and carinated bowls are decorated with added wavy lines or bands. Regional differences remain weak and the production over Egypt is more or less unified (Aston, 1996: 59-65; 79-88).

The production of pottery has also come under particular scrutiny in Egypt, perhaps because of the technological implications of the typology or because the perception of the Egyptian state as highly structured and bureaucratic seems to invite a look into the organization of the processes that created material culture. Depictions of pottery production in wall paintings and models show it as part of larger manufacturing complexes, but there is an oft-noted lack of written references to potters or their place in society. The lack of mention of the value of pottery in any context can be seen as an indication that this was negligible. The production in large workshops as part of a range of materials, all operating under central control and channelled along well-established avenues of distribution, is a part of the evidence for centralized production, but we also know of workshops attached to industrial and residential estates, which are actually the most easily identifiable, and therefore best known, mode of production. The uniformity of fabrics, standardized shapes, dimensions, and capacity of vessels show the degree of control in the industry, where limited centres produce a large number of vessels. The limited number of production centres also seems to be true for more specialised products, such as decorated pottery, or vases for funerary purposes (Bourriau et al. 2000: 135-141).

In this configuration, we can identify a contrast characterising Egyptian society, as well as its present study, between the projected impression of an all-seeing centre maintaining a firm social structure and the potential for subversion and self-determination in this framework. That tension is very effectively expressed in pottery and its production: on the one hand we know of the existence of central and attached workshops, and the uniformity of the products encourages us to think of a controlled production, but on the other, we know very little about the more informal aspects of the distribution of final products. The ideas we hold about Dynastic social structure, reinforced by Egyptian practices of record keeping and emphasis on some aspects of life and material culture, serve to highlight some activities and obscure others. In order then to study the full range of practices it is necessary to look at what patterns materials would form at the margins of the system, as Chapter 6 will show.

The Aegean

Since the beginning of the study we have set up the Aegean as the great counter-argument to the material and decorative simplification driven by social and hierarchical complexity. Nowhere in the Eastern Mediterranean is the phenomenon of pottery decoration more intense and sustained than in Minoan Crete. The major preoccupations of archaeological studies on that island are the untangling of pottery sequences and the understanding of the nature and changes over time of palatial society, and in fact the two can be related, and studied in tandem. We have already flagged as a main concern the relationship between social and decorative complexity, so in the case of a region where impressive ceramic traditions develop at the same time as significant social negotiations take place, it is inevitable to wonder how the two might be related.

Hints at the relationship between pottery decoration and intense social negotiation appear from the beginning of the period. In the start of the Middle Minoan period (just before 2000 BC), pottery is handmade. Wheelmade pottery became more widespread in MM IB, intriguingly not as part of an orientation towards increased or more efficient production but initially associated with more limited numbers of small open shapes used in consumption (Knappett 2005: 156-158). At the same period there

was intense experimentation with a variety of forms of decoration, including manipulations of texture such as incision and barbotine which were never as common in the following periods (see fig. 4.9) (Betancourt 1985: 81-85; MacGillivray 2007: 109). This phase of experimentation and innovation is often directly associated with its transitional character, the pottery (and especially the tableware) created in the context of a diverse social world, and reinforcing and emphasizing that multiplicity, creating feedback between the two (Tomkins 2012: 71-72). Additionally, depending on the contexts (and partly on how we select and interpret ceramic characteristics) this diversity can take a variety of characters, from the simply varied expression and negotiation of identities to the explicit articulation of hierarchies (Haggis 2012: 195; MacDonald and Knappett 2007: 3-8, 161-162). There are also practical reasons associated with production that can result in a diverse output, especially at the scale of Knossos; the site is drawing on a greater population, more craftspeople, perhaps of different origins, and therefore are also more opportunities for choice and diversity, which can be manipulated for the creation of unique and innovative results (Knappett 2004: 258-264; MacDonald 2011: 452-453). This, however, does not exclude the investment of diversity with social meanings, since the origin of a practice and its employment can be two different things.

The negotiation, statement and definition of social roles is often associated in research and the theory that informs it, with communal occasions providing the opportunity for the side-by-side display of these varied vessels. The fact that a lot of the pottery in secondary fills is related to the consumption of food and drink is considered to be related to a large-scale expression of that phenomenon, and so is the greater investment and innovation in the shapes serving functions of consumption (Day and Wilson 1998). However, it is important to note that due to the difference in use-life, an accumulated deposit is likely to consist mostly of small serving and consumption shapes and deposit composition is not always as meaningful as is assumed (Whitelaw 2012: 117-118). Other propositions on the process of the formation of Knossian elites place primary importance on communal activities beyond just the consumption of food and drink (Driessen 2004: 80)

Occasional pottery traditions stand out through the attention and time dedicated to the fabrication of elaborate shapes and their adornment with complex,

often representational, motifs apparently unique to each vessel. Crete is unique in the area of study due to the intensity and consistency in decorated pottery, an investment which is visible even in periods which are not dominated by the styles that study has so far singled out as particularly elaborate and outstanding. In the Protopalatial, the most elaborate such tradition is Kamares ware (Hatzaki 2007a: 151-158). In Kamares ware, the elaborate shapes and motifs are combined with impressively thin walls, or impressed decoration, which reproduces with striking effectiveness the appearance of metal, and polychromy (see fig. 4.10). This type of pottery is found exported in the Cyclades and Mainland Greece, as well as beyond the Aegean (always in small quantities), at sites such as Karmi, Harageh, Lahun, Abydos, Ugarit, Hazor (Walberg 2001), and recently Sidon (MacGillivray 2003). It is very interesting, however, that although the occasional decorated Minoan vessel is found in the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean there does not seem to be any sustained effort to market or export these products, as was later the case at the Greek mainland or in Cyprus, which is more directly comparable given its sustained trade in open shapes, such as White Slip II bowls. Based on this, it is reasonable to conclude that, whatever the roots of the phenomenon of the Minoan abundance of decoration, it is internal, and the conditions for it could not be easily exported or transmitted in other locations.

The most elaborate style of LM, covered by many terms but called here "Dark-on-Light Lustrous" (Hatzaki 2007a: 151-158) uses a new repertoire of figural motifs, which are shared between pottery painting, wall paintings, and elsewhere, showing yet another instance of decoration shifting between media. These include marine animals (which led to the term 'Marine Style" to refer to some of the most conspicuous examples), olive sprays, reeds and other vegetal motifs, as well as more abstract patterns, all of them flowing on an open field (see figs. 4.11 and 4.12) (Hatzaki 2007a: 160-166). The attractiveness of this pottery affects the way it is treated and described, with close studies describing changes in style in loving detail. This has often led to problematic practices, such as focusing on "canonical" sequences, which actually represent only a portion of the material found at palatial sites, but are imposed on the rest of Crete, sidestepping regional variation.

If we read highly elaborate pottery styles, such as Kamares and Dark-on-Light Lustrous, as peaks in a continuum of decoration, it does seem intriguing that these

correspond to the periods when palatial culture appears to be especially strong in Crete, and when material culture in general is rich and varied. The relations between different materials, such as metal vessels, woven fabrics, wall painting and decorated pottery can be seen in that same context as indications of the same ideas about the appearance of material world being displayed in a variety of levels and contexts. This potential pattern of peaks in the use of decoration of pottery is one I wish to draw attention to, because elements of it appeared in comparable situations in other macro-regions of the eastern Mediterranean (for example in the just discussed New Kingdom Egypt), and because it is possible to examine that impression in greater detail through quantitative data in the case studies in Chapter 5, and assess its validity.

It matters, however, if indeed there are peaks, what is their material background. Turning back to the social and historical overview of the macro-regions from Chapter 1, we can note that there is a more or less unique combination that characterises Minoan Crete: perceived social mobility and continued negotiation exist in the context of institutions holding real power. In that way it combines two phenomena: The resources and potential of control on the one hand, and the slightly insecurity that necessitates a constant process of social negotiation and construction of status on the other.

The role the palaces played in the production of pottery and the degree of direct control they might have exercised is a matter of intense debate. For Kamares, attempts have been made to show that Knossos plays more the role of the consumer in regards to this style, which continues traditions that had appeared in the Mesara before the palatial period (Day and Wilson 1998; 2002: 159-160). However, Faber's (Day *et al.* 2006) chemical analysis of surface finishes did not confirm this initial suggestion, and those results suggested instead a more diffuse and complicated production. Additionally, the identification of the physical location or locations of production is not going to provide the final answer as to whether the production is controlled or not, and moreover it has been suggested that the acquisition of the finished product from the area of production could have been as successful a strategy for the increase of prestige as the control of the process itself, as well as a drive for change through the influence of elites as the main consumers (Van de Moortel 2002: 193-195; Schoep 2006; 2010: 67-69). Beyond the Mesara, at Malia, the notion of the

technological profile was used to analyse the organisation of production, based on criteria such as standardisation and time investment in different shapes and types (Poursat and Knappett 2005:147-149; Knappett 1997: 306). This suggested that tablewares show strong standardisation in size, variability in surface treatment and high elaboration and time investment, leading to the suggestion of a 'partially administered' mode of production, based on consumption demand and control from the higher social strata which could in that way acquire the output they desired and relatively restrict it. In other words, similar processes of indirect (but perhaps not completely negligible) control are suggested for the way elites operated at two different palatial sites.

The Neopalatial is generally considered to be a period of closer control exercised by the elite (Van de Moortel 2002: 190), and it is possible to ask whether that control extended to guiding pottery production, and whether, if there was an increase in decoration, it is related to that. Additionally, it has been suggested (Van de Moortel 2002: 204) that indications of greater concern with speedier production demonstrate a more general interest in efficiency and cost control, which starts with utilitarian vessels and in LMIA expands to include most pottery. Perhaps this could mean an increase in specialisation, with potters producing only vessels in a specific range of shapes, fabrics and appearances and turning them out quicker in fewer episodes of more routine production, improving their motor skills, which could also result in a more standardised appearance. Pottery distribution shows little restriction for most styles, even the complex ones, at least for the early part of the Neopalatial. It is likely, however, that the rarity we see in the LM IB in the appearances of the Dark-on-Light Lustrous might be an expression of ceramic complexity reaching levels suitable for a top tier, which is not completely inaccessible (as can be seen by its presence in other sites and contexts), but is produced in limited quantities and is much more difficult to acquire, and which can mostly be associated, beyond the Palace, with elite contexts. Again then, we see that, despite the differences in social structure between the Protopalatial and the Neopalatial, the direction and manipulation of pottery production could be operating at similar scales.

Conversely, the Greek mainland seems to fit better to the trajectories we see in other areas of the eastern Mediterranean, especially the Levant. This does not mean

that these regions followed identical steps – the specific social conditions in the former, the different place in trade networks and the geographical position facilitating a close relationship with Minoan Crete were all influencing factors. Rather, the similarity we identify is due to the common tendency towards an advancing simplicity and standardization of pottery decoration in the Late Bronze Age. In fact, in terms of comparative questions, it is even more interesting to ask, not why is the mainland different from the Levant, but why is it different from Crete, and in what ways. The non-inclusion of the mainland in the case studies precludes answering this question in depth, but a comparative overview indicates that whereas Minoan pottery decoration is often associated with drinking, pouring and presentation shapes used in the context of communal consumption, Mycenaean contexts associated with the same activities often appear to be decoration-free, such as the kylix-stocked pantries at Pylos (Fox 2012: 40, 137). Instead, the social situations which do appear to have a special connection with decorated pottery are mostly related to funerary drinking rituals and display, as well as trade.

From the beginning of the Late Helladic period until LHII (c. 1700-1450 BC), diverse and elaborate pictorial motifs such as plants and marine life are used to decorate pottery and there is a strong influence from Crete, starting from the late MH (Zerner 1993: 39-48) which is gradually changed through local elements such as a preference for symmetrical compositions (Mountjoy 1993: 35-66). The areas of direct and sustained influence are especially concentrated on elaborate pottery associated with eating and drinking, and the relationship might involve the sustained movement of craftspeople (Shelmerdine 1997). This phase is primarily associated with power accumulation and construction through a diversified approach involving a range of materials and strategies, which are perfectly illustrated by the contents of the Shaft Graves in Mycenae (Voutsaki 1999: 108). In the beginning of LHIII (c. 1400 BC), the depiction of motifs changed and suggestions of mass production and the repetition of more standard designs can be seen in the mainland, at the same time as interaction with other materials decreases, with the exception of details influenced by frescoes (see figs. 4.13 and 4.14). Finally, following the collapse of the palaces, in LHIIIC (see fig. 4.15), more local styles appeared, and intriguingly, unpainted pottery becomes much less common and linear decoration spreads to previously plain shapes

(Mountjoy, 1993: 90-110), a characteristic to observe and set aside for now, until we turn to look more closely at Knossos.

How the development of standardisation relates to the mainland palaces as institutions and their position in society, and whether production was centrally controlled, is a difficult question to answer. Given the availability of palatial written records, it is useful to examine if pottery production in LHIII can be read in this context. As in Egypt, written sources show little interest in this sector of production, although a royal potter is mentioned (Hruby 2013). The destruction deposits from the palace of Pylos have been studied by Whitelaw (2001) with this question in mind. These indicate that a small number of potters was sufficient to produce the entirety of the pottery used in the palace, while the total requirements for the area controlled by the palace were much larger. This warns against overestimating the importance of the palace as a producer and consumer. It is still not clear from this whether the pottery was produced and distributed under palatial administration or acquired from other sources (acquisition of the fine tableware from a few, or a single, favoured potter has been suggested, for example in Galaty 1999), but it gives a sense of scale. More recent studies (Hruby 2013) confirm those conclusions on the modest scale of pottery needs and production and the limited professional specialisation. The question remains whether these observations can also be applied to other palaces and their respective areas of control.

The Argolid particularly is likely to require a different model, on the basis of what we know of it: a lot more of the pottery than at Pylos was decorated, showing again the problem with underplaying regional differences, which also obscures the understanding of other areas of diversity (Sherratt 1980). In addition, clay analyses have demonstrated that there are types of pottery, specifically pictorial kraters, usually depicting chariot scenes, which are produced in the Argolid but found in their majority in Cyprus and the Near East (Crouwel 1991: 34). The ability to produce ceramic products targeted specifically to export for their own sake in foreign markets indicates a different organisation of pottery production, perhaps involving more specialisation and control in some areas. It also indicates an understanding of markets and the demand for products which parallels Cyprus itself, which also uses the eastern

Mediterranean trading circuit and the desirability of the products moving in it to export decorated non-containers.

Additionally, the mainland Aegean exported containers, most famously stirrup jars of various sizes and types as well as other small forms, such as alabastra and flasks, possibly filled with a product which was itself elaborated in manufacture, such as aromatic oils or alcoholic drinks. These reached their peak point roughly in the first half and middle of the 14th century. Mycenaean pottery is especially plentiful at Ugarit and reached Israel and the Jordan via Tell el-Ajjul. Many imports are also found in Egypt during the contemporary Amarna period, but in the following LH IIIB their quantities decrease in Egypt but increase in the Levant, where they are found associated with Cypriot pottery. Their numbers also rise in Cyprus itself, where they are locally imitated, eventually taking over the Mycenaean niche of the market after the collapse of the palaces and whatever trade machine they supported (Mountjoy, 1993: 167-174). In the comparison between Mainland Greece and the Levant, it is possible to be led astray by the intermediate place of both areas in the "simplicity vs elaboration" continuum and the common trend towards increasing centralisation, and it is, therefore, also important to identify the differences. These are especially visible in the place of pottery trade in the Aegean Mainland and the investment in it as an export product, both as a container and in its own right, which is only exactly paralleled in Cyprus.

Cyprus

One of the most notable features of Cypriot pottery, which exemplifies many other aspects that are unusual about it, is the fact that it remains mostly handmade until well into the LC period (Åström 1966: 138; Crewe 2007: 2), four centuries after the potter's wheel was adopted in the surrounding Mediterranean regions. The choice to avoid the wheel has implications for the character and intensity of production and shows the emphasis on maintaining local distinctions. The same emphasis is seen in the unusual variety of ways to decorate pottery that co-existed on the island from the beginning of the Middle Cypriot, forming individual trajectories which move at different paces. For example, in the middle and the end of MC and the beginning of

LC, eastern, central and northern regions of the island produce a range of painted wares collective known as White Painted wares, while at the same time the Karpass region has its own characteristic painted traditions, such as Red-on-black (Herscher 1991:45-47; Maguire 1991: 60-61; Merrillees 1974: 47-53, 1979: 118-123; Steel 2004: 135). This was the period when regionalism was most pronounced. This variation can be used to argue against a unified view of the island, and instead towards an emphasis placed on the distinctiveness of local identities (Crewe 2007: 64-66), expressed in the pottery people use, and the connections they make (Maguire 2009: 13, 19, 26; Merrillees 1971), partly via decoration, implicitly recognised through its use as a distinguishing factor for wares. The decision to create a typology reflecting these regional traditions has avoided the trap of forcing a unified, canonical sequence on the data, and creating a potential for unique insights into regional differences and intra-island relationships. On the other hand, the same choice has often led to an overcomplicated system which is not always consistent and helpful, and has created problems, as in the study of the White Painted complex of wares (Knapp 2013a: 323-325). There are oscillations between less or more uniformity, but as the Late Bronze Age advanced there was a consistent trend towards similarity, perhaps associated with the intensification of the links between different parts of the island (Keswani 1991: 97). By LCIIA-B the whole island is relatively homogeneous, although there are still minor differences in the production of the same ware, such as White Slip.

Throughout the Middle and Late Cypriot period, the quantity of decoration in Cyprus remains consistently high, in levels (as Chapter 7 shows in detail) that are reminiscent of the Aegean and set Cyprus apart from the nearby Levant.[5] The content of decoration changes through time in various ways and along various dimensions. These include a movement from the overwhelming use of incision associated with the Red Polished wares of the early MC (Herscher 1991: 45-47) to the greater use of painting, the already discussed increasing uniformity and the convergence of potting traditions around Cyprus, and the advancing standardisation and simplification of

[5] For a selection of sites covering the range of the period in roughly chronological order, see Barlow (1996) for Alambra *Mouttes*, Frankel and Webb (2006) for Marki *Alonia*, Crewe (2007) for Kalopsidha *Ayios Iakovos* and Enkomi and Todd et *al*. (1993) for Sanidha.

decoration. In the Middle Cypriot, the most elaborate examples we find among the Red Polished Ware are made out of distinct fabrics, suggesting an a priori separate conception and execution of this elaborate category (see fig. 4.16). The same vessels are finely, time-consumingly and laboriously incised. As the rest of the Red Polished category, their red and burnished surfaces give a metallic visual impression. The finest decoration is especially associated with pouring vessels, which are used at a different ratio to open serving vessels than the Aegean. In Cyprus, a 1:1 or 1:2 ratio of pouring to serving is quite common, suggesting perhaps also a different relationship with the provision of the consumed substance, maybe associated with greater independence, reciprocity and self-reliance.

After the regionally-specific painted traditions of the MCIII-LCI transition, White Slip is perhaps the most characteristic decorated pottery of the LC period. The most typical shape is the milk bowl (see fig. 4.17)(Bergoffen 2001: 146-151). Roughly contemporary, and often decorated by relief in the earlier examples or by painting in the later, is Base Ring ware, most famously represented by juglets, which will be discussed below in the context of trade. LC II standardisation is seen not only in the appearance of vessels, but also in fabrics and clay recipes, and it is concurrent with changes in production in this period. There is no doubt about the existence of intense specialisation in pottery production in LC II, since specialised sites have been discovered, such as *Toumba tou Skourou*, Athienou and Sanidha *Moutti tou Ayiou Serkou*, with workshops dedicated to the manufacture of vessels in specific wares, often in association with copper processing (Steele 2004: 163-165; Todd and Filides 2001: 27-37). The outcomes of the processes of changes in decoration, uniformity and standardisation come together in the development and use of a shared complex of Plain White and White Painted Wheel-made wares (see fig. 4.18) across the island in LC II and until the end of the period of study (Crewe and Knappett 2012: 181). Cyprus having actively resisted the wheel in earlier period, it is important to consider its adoption, and the products resulting from it, as fully consciously developed. Crewe for example sees wheel-made pottery, or pottery that appeared to be wheel-made, as a way to show an alignment with a Levantine connection and to an urban way of life, as contacts increase. Interestingly, despite the tenacity of the quantity of decoration, this increase of simplification and the reduction of diversity does appear to affect levels in

the end, as seen for example in the gradually decreasing quantities of decorated pottery from LC IB to LC IIB at Episkopi, as Plain White increases (Crewe 2007: 46).

The patterning might be obvious, but what are its social implications is far less clear (Knapp 2013a: 401-402). I described in Chapter 1 the increasing social stratification and rise of elites in Cyprus, so is this associated with the changes in production, increased control and therefore more standardisation? Specialised workshops, usually incorporating multiple materials, have been identified, but are these controlled from some kind of central administration or more generally supported by an urban population with a shifting social structure? Drawing a line from the characteristics of production to its organization and control is difficult, but two things should be noted in regard to the correlation of pottery simplification and urbanisation in Cyprus: firstly, pottery decoration overall suffers (primarily in complexity and diversity, and to a lesser degree in quantity) but does not disappear. Secondly, throughout the Bronze Age history of the island there are few indications of a "peak" correlating with an overall higher elaboration of material culture, in the sense of the Minoan Neopalatial Dark-on-Light Lustrous styles or even the Egyptian Blue Painted. Furthermore, at least an elementary level of specialization has its roots in the beginning of the second millennium on the island, as does the association of pottery and metalworking, illustrated beyond doubt by the recent publication of a potter's workshop from Ambelikou *Aletri* (Webb and Frankel 2013: 213-219). This clearly demonstrates that the existence of centralised control is a likely correlate, but definitely not necessary for the existence of specialised workshops.

From this broader point of view, and in comparison with the surrounding macro-regions, it appears that in the relationship between Cypriot pottery and society, changes are long-term and gradual, without sudden ruptures. In a sense, this parallels social conditions — not that there is an absence of conflict or change in the Bronze Age history of Cyprus (after all, that is the phase when the island landscape changed from a collection of autonomous villages to urban trading centres dealing with the greater powers of the eastern Mediterranean) but these changes are not strictly defined by events, and they are not even confined in the chronological divisions, but bleed into each other and through those borders. However, this also happens in Minoan Crete, where change happens at different paces in different places and features and the

boundaries of phases are very context-dependent. It is not possible then to attribute the unique features of ceramic changes in Cyprus to the rate of development alone, and there must be another crucial difference that makes it stand out. In order to understand any changes, we need to situate them in the unique social context of the island and the part decorated pottery plays in it, and Chapter 7 will show some of these peculiarities in sharp relief.

A final characteristic that makes Cyprus stand out is its relationship with trade, and the part pottery plays as an export product. The formation of a network of contacts, and its expansion, owes much to the copper reserves of the island (Knapp 1997: 46-47), but it is by no means limited to the trade of metals. Cypriot pottery started participating in the eastern Mediterranean exchange networks from the Middle Cypriot period. Some styles of White Painted juglets (see fig. 4.19) circulated, presumably stimulated by the Levantine interest in this vessel form in the MB II, and they are found in Tell el-Daba and elsewhere (Maguire 1991: 64; 2009: 13-16, 53-55). Trade really exploded from around 1650 BC, dominated by Base Ring ware, usually juglets (see fig. 4.20). The contents of these juglets have been a subject of much debate, and an opium-containing solution is a recurring suggestion, initially partly based on the appearance and decoration of the vessel, which according to Merrillees (1974: 30-38) makes reference to the opium poppy and the methods for obtaining the opium latex. Although the matter is complicated by reuse and analytical problems, analytical confirmation for this hypothesis has been obtained at least for some juglets (Bisset *et al.* 1996; Koschel 1996). Base Ring also seems to make reference to metals, both in the dark-coloured surfaces and in aspects of the vessels' shape, including the eponymous ring base. Additionally, occasional elements of attached decoration such as rivets are a direct connection. There is no reason for Merrillees' opium interpretation to be incompatible with the skeuomorphic one previously suggested. The same object being part of multiple sets of connections and recalling several things at once (a precious container, valued contents, the possible substances or contexts of use of those contents) is the rule rather than the exception, and if the visual and sensual properties of the objects themselves lead us to view it as such, then it is an indication of being on the right track.

Open vessels were also traded, most characteristically White Slip bowls. White Slip I is found in Second Intermediate Period Tell el-Daba (starting from phase D/3, around the beginning of the 16th century) and especially at Tell el-Ajjul, where it appears from its earlier form, the Proto-White Slip (Maguire 2009: 39-49; Eriksson 2007: 71-75). White Slip II is found at greater numbers and it is more widely distributed, particularly concentrated at Ugarit and other Levantine sites in the 14th and 13th centuries. How these fit into the trading system of the period is not completely certain, but it has been suggested that since they are light and easy to transport they could have been traded initially directly by the crews of ships (Artzy 2001: 107-114; Bergoffen 2001: 145-153; 2005: 73). We know that pottery and metals were produced together, and now we see them travelling together. The presence of one can, therefore, recall the other. Even though the appearance of White Slip I, with its thick white slip and dark-painted lattice decoration, is difficult to associate with metal vessels, it is intimately connected with them through technology, owing much to developments of pyrotechnology resulting from copper processing (Eriksson 2007: 16-19; 48-49). This shows that the ties between different aspects of production are complex: pottery and metals for example can be connected not only when the vessels manufactured in each look like the other, but also because they are produced together. Perhaps the popularity of WS bowls abroad, which continues when the effort invested in their manufacture and appearance heavily diminishes, is due to their relationship with other materials, a relationship that goes deeper than the way they look and feel.

This incorporation of open vessels in trade has parallels with the economic choices we see in the mainland Aegean. Additionally, this relationship is direct, and goes beyond the parallel: Aegean imports on Cyprus increase, and by the end of the period of study, after the middle of the 13th century, Aegean pictorial kraters are not only imported in Cyprus itself, but it has been suggested that Cypriot trade is primary in distributing them around the eastern Mediterranean, and after the end of the palace system, when Aegean imports cease, Cyprus itself actually takes up the production of the type, taking advantage of the demand in Mediterranean markets (Cadogan, 1991: 169-171; Steele, 2004: 169-174). This type of export is very interesting, because it is another thread of evidence to integrate into the suggestions that there was a demand for decorated pottery. Mycenaean imports could also signal potential divisions within

Cyprus itself. These are generally not restricted, but the kraters, which are also among the most elaborately decorated shapes, are only found in the richest tombs, and they could be infused with symbolic values (Keswani 1989; 1996). Finally, when places such as Cyprus and the Aegean invested in the export of pottery, both as a container and in itself, it leads us to ask how this trade was managed, and whether there is a deliberate effort to create and increase desirability, based on an understanding of what the material culture of the surrounding regions is like, and what there is a demand for. These subjects, and how the decoration of vessels comes into it, are going to resurface in Chapters 7 and 8.

Levant

Middle Bronze Age

It was a deliberate choice to leave the discussion of Levantine pottery and its comparison with the rest of the macro-regions for the end, because the ties between the Levant and the rest of the eastern Mediterranean run deep, and it is entangled in the dynamics of the surrounding regions politically, socially, commercially and, as a consequence, materially. As I described in Chapter 3, 'wares' dominate the study of pottery here. These are categories with often problematic definitions, and loose spatial and temporal content, but it is impossible to gain an understanding of the comparative relationship between this and other macro-regions without grappling with them.

Long-lived sites with stratified deposits are the backbone of the chronology of the region, and they can also give an impression of the presence and kinds of decorated pottery, and of how these change through time. A good example is Qatna in the Northern Levant, which shows how decorated pottery decreases radically from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age at the same time as the method of decoration changes and painted pottery becomes progressively more common at the expense of incision (Luciani 2008: 115-117), which fits into a general trend in the region. Overall, there seems to be more decorated pottery than in Egypt (but less than in Cyprus or the Aegean), usually using simple geometric motifs in red or black paints, or combining the two in a variety of shapes, both open and closed. With simple decoration as a background, there appear to be periodic peaks in pottery decoration, when more effort is being invested in its appearance and production. It has been suggested that this

occasional practice can bring pottery to the elite sphere of interest and life, and these peaks are often what is recognised as distinct wares. One such example from the Ebla/Aleppo region is the 'North Syrian/Cilician' or 'Syro-Cilician Painted Ware' (see fig. 4.21), typically with pictorial decoration of a crouching ram on carinated bowls, juglets and pitchers (Nigro 1998: 287-288; 2002: 313-315). Nigro, who studied the pottery from Ebla, divides the decorated pottery into 'Simple' or 'Common Painted Ware' (see fig. 4.22) and 'Specialised productions' (in which NS/CPW belongs), distinguished by their fabric and shapes.

The ratios of these wares change through time, as seen through the well-stratified sequence of Ebla. In the early MB, Simple Ware is usually incised and Specialised Ware are painted with geometrical motifs. The 'Specialised productions' also include vessels imitating metallic properties, particularly colour and shine, such as Black and Orange Burnished. The amount of so-called 'specialised painted pottery' and its proportion as part of the site assemblage increases as the MB progresses and it is found on a range of shapes, mostly small open and pouring ones (Nigro, 2002: 298-312; Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003: 291-298). There also differences in distribution between the more elaborate decorated styles of pottery, which have a wider geographical range, and simpler painted ones. Nigro (1998: 287-288) has suggested that the differential distribution is a result of movement along different channels, with the more elaborate pottery becoming an object of exchange in higher levels, through inter-elite connections. NS/CPW continues in the MBIIA (see fig. 4.23), especially in palatial and funerary contexts, but in the final phase of the MBA there is a general tendency towards coarser and mass-produced shapes, and 'specialised' pottery is no longer painted, but limited to very fine slipped vessels with a metallic appearance. Simple Ware is the only painted pottery, with occasional figural elements (Nigro, 2002: 316-327).

In the south, sites with stratified deposits, such as Tel Aphek and Megiddo, are also crucial in situating changes in time, without relying exclusively on the identification of vaguely defined types. As in the North, painted decoration is usually linear or geometric with occasional animal motifs, and incised decoration is also used. The decoration on Levantine Painted Ware, the southern equivalent of NS/CPW (though boundaries between the two become ever more hazy; Bagh 2002: 89-101;

2013: 21; Tubb 1983) consists of geometric motifs, mostly on closed shapes, especially jugs and jars (see fig. 4.24). The majority of known examples, as well as the earliest ones, come from Tell el-Daba. Some shapes are always associated with specific kinds of motifs, such as juglets decorated with concentric circles, while others are never found plain, such as dipper jugs/juglets. Interestingly, more elaborate LPW is found in tombs from Kharji together with Kamares ware imported from the Aegean, suggesting a possible association between the two different kinds of decorated pottery, making their belonging in the same conceptual category more likely. On the same subject of ceramic associations, LPW is found in Egypt, even beyond the Delta area, in the Middle Kingdom pyramid sites of Kahun and Lisht (Bagh 2002: 96-101). Given that Kamares and other types of Aegean and Levantine pottery are also found in the same sites, in combination with the distribution of decorated pottery in later periods, this raises very interesting questions. Is it possible that the position of such sites in the social structure of Egypt made the acquisition of objects such as decorated pottery easier or more desirable, due to the channels through which decorated pottery moved, or is it just that a disproportionate number of settlement sites that have been excavated from the Middle Kingdom are planned royal settlements?

Juglets, either incised as in the Tell el-Yahudiyeh ware, or painted, are a hallmark of the later MB II period. Tell el-Yahudiyeh ware is shared with northern parts of Egypt, with white paste-filled incisions contrasting against a dark ground (Kempinski 1992: 161-166; 180). Not only are juglets often decorated, but also their decoration forms interesting relationships with specific shapes and types, in the way I described above. In this phase of connections all along the Levantine coastal strip and its inland partners, leading all the way south to the Nile Delta, it is suggestive that these objects of trade are not just singled out by their decoration, but also marked by it, in a variety of different, potentially significant, ways (Maguire 2009: 53). So, at the peak of urbanisation in the region, we have the "era of the juglet", when urban centres and small states with different internal structures, indicated by the differences in the use of elements such as palaces and fortifications and their relationships with other sites in their hinterlands, employ pottery decoration as a way to connect with one another, at the same time as identifying themselves and their products.

Levantine Painted Ware might be a recognisable style, but there is a range of pottery decoration in the Middle Bronze Age that is not considered a part of it. This decoration, as seen at stratified sites, is mostly incised and found on kraters and jars in the MB IIA alongside some simple painted decoration. Red slipped and burnished surfaces are typical of the period, especially on bowls, and they are perhaps associated with the trend of a metallic appearance which has also been identified in the north. Painted pottery becomes more frequent in the middle of the phase, as seen at sites such as Tel Aphek, mostly on closed vessels of various sizes used for storage, transportation and pouring (Amiran 1969:90). As MB IIA ended, incising became rarer at stratified Aphek and painted decoration completely disappeared with the exception of rim bands (Cohen 2002: 113-117; Kochavi and Yadin 2002: 189-216).

In the selection of some aspects of ceramic practice in the Levant and their designation as a ware, an element of similarity and distinctiveness is identified by specialists about them. This identification of distinctiveness often correlates with higher elaboration, and therefore it is a tempting idea to use them as an indication of more investment in decorative complexity, and therefore "peaks", while the decoration not identified as a ware represents the simpler background, in the periods when it exists. There is a degree of arbitrariness in delineating only certain groups (and Bagh (2013: 22) is entirely confident that LPW is, in fact, a coherent group), but despite that, any decision to focus on a particular aspect has information potential. In the case of wares, it is the demonstration that certain kinds of pottery in some periods are distinct and they command attention. However, in order not to be biased by the dominant system of knowledge and overlook continuity, it is necessary to examine decorated pottery as a whole and merely use wares as an indication. In Chapters 7 and 8, I will show how this can be applied in practice, but for now, taking the broad view, we can retain the suggestion that there are spikes in ceramic elaboration, and that these might correlate with geographical divisions between the northern and southern Levant and include a social component, as a hypothesis to be examined in greater depth.

Although I have tried to describe here an overall trajectory for the Southern Levant in the MBA, the area is not entirely uniform. Towards the north, LPW is introduced and certain sites, such as Dan and Hazor, turn into major centres (Maeir,

2002: 261-267). Southwards of the Central Valley, the finest material culture, including imported and elaborate pottery, is found at sites near the coast, or at nodes of connection between the sea and an inland network of sites, which were well-placed to take advantage of the intensifying network of eastern Mediterranean connections (Cohen, 2002: 123-130).

This demonstrates that not only is there internal variation in the scale and organization of social units, and in the intensity and kinds of their connections with one another, but also that these differences are associated with differences in the use and intensity of pottery painting. Crucially, we are seeing potential associations which are worth exploring in greater depth later, such as that between the formation of more socially complex entities and in what ways elaborated material culture might be called upon to support them, or inversely under what circumstances they might gravitate towards greater standardisation or more decoration (and finally, if decoration does exist, what areas of life is it associated with, and how do we see that comparatively in the eastern Mediterranean). More locally, it leads to questions concerning the differences between the northern and the southern Levant which are now apparent: we see divergences in ceramic developments, and we see them also in sociopolitical organization, so how do the two relate to one another and the overall issue of the relationship between decoration and social complexity?

Late Bronze Age

In the Late Bronze Age, painted decoration is still common in some areas but little effort is invested in its execution. In the Southern Levant it becomes more uniform and seems to be the product of a standardized industry with large quantities produced by a limited number of workshops (Goren 1992: 232-236). There are still, however, identifiable "wares", indicating areas of greater investment, resulting in more elaborate objects. In the LBA there are two such can be identified: Bichrome (see fig. 4.25) starts from the end of the MB, but is most common in the LB I. It is of mixed origin, produced both in Cyprus and the southern Levant, as confirmed by clay analyses, and its black and red motifs are found on pouring and serving shapes, such as jugs and kraters (Goren 1992: 236-238; Amiran 1969: 152-154). Chocolate-on-White ware, with its creamy, often burnished, surfaces and geometrical decoration

(see fig. 4.26) is the other early LBA style which stands out with its attention to shape and finishing (Amiran 1969: 158-159).

With few exceptions, in the Northern Levant there is also a general tendency towards coarser and more mass-produced shapes. Overall, there is impressive continuity in fabrics and surface treatments from the end of the MBA to the LB I, documented at multiple stratified sites, despite the political changes and the incorporation in larger imperial formations (Colantoni 2010: 667; Iamoni 2010: 338-340). The most impressive of the elaborate exceptions is Nuzi Ware (see fig. 4.27), which were characterised by light-coloured motifs, sometimes geometric but especially floral, on a dark ground. Usually they are tall, thin-walled and open, such as beakers. In the 15th and 14th centuries they are found throughout the Mitannian sphere of influence, but never in great numbers (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 331-332). These are going to be the subject of further research in Chapter 8, but it is interesting for now to see them as a particularly elaborate example related to the possible recurring trend in the region for more complex styles developing against a simpler background.

As I said in the beginning of the section, the Levant holds a special place in regards to interregional connections. It gives the impression of a market and a connector at the same time, receiving products, incorporating them into its own changing structures, and perhaps forwarding them to other areas. Pottery is one of those products, both as a container (as in juglets and Canaanite jars, larger transport amphorae) and as an object in itself. The presence of decoration in the Levant is never overwhelming, but looking at trade, and the kinds of objects that end up in archaeological deposits, decorated ceramic vessels imported in themselves are consistently present, from Cypriot White Slip II bowls, to the occasional Kamares cup, to Mycenaean pictorial kraters. These objects make apparent how the different areas of the eastern Mediterranean are not just abstractly in contact, but physically co-present. How decorated objects are received in the area and whether decoration is differently perceived is a question to take further, and it shows how the Levant adds new and different dimensions to the study of decorated pottery.

Conclusions

Overall, despite the simplifications and generalisations that are unavoidable in a brief account at this resolution, this broad gaze has revealed similarities and differences in the pottery of the eastern Mediterranean, showing the place of each in the study and what knowledge they might contribute in the understanding of the second millennium. This has shown that the variation and richness in the ways ceramic decoration manifests and changes is much greater than the preconceptions about any single region might have led us to anticipate. There is almost no period or place in the second millennium eastern Mediterranean that does not have some decorated pottery, including Egypt where this material has been far less emphasized. What changes between these areas is the emphasis and effort that is placed on pottery, and its differential engagement with various modes of production, which is in a cyclical relationship with the needs and demands of the users of the pottery.

In some areas, spikes can be identified in pottery decoration, which have the potential of drawing the material into an elite sphere of life, while others seem to be characterised by a more constant present of decoration. In parallel to those, wider processes are also at work: trends towards increasing standardization in appearance and intensification of production in parts of the eastern Mediterranean, and increasing connections between different macro-regions, which allow the same objects to move between regimes of value and be marketed and accepted by completely different regions. In order to more closely and confidently interpret these differences in the employment of decoration and responses to it, it is necessary to examine more closely the archaeology, dive deeply into the changing timelines of decoration and study ceramic assemblages in context. There is no better place to start this investigation than the great puzzle itself, the place where ceramic decoration and palaces are intimately connected, spatially as well as in archaeological study: Palatial Crete in the Aegean.

Chapter 5. Knossos and Crete: a case study in plenty

Introduction

Crete has been a point of interest since the beginning of the subject's investigation, as the counter-argument to the suggestion (exemplified by Egypt) that, as societies become more complex, some aspects of their culture are subject to simplification, specifically those that most relate to the everyday life and activities of the majority of people. In the previous chapter I examined the development of decorated pottery in different areas of the Eastern Mediterranean. Minoan Crete stood out sharply from this comparison at a broad resolution: in terms of both the constancy of the practice of decorating pottery and its intensity and variety, this culture appears different from most of the areas surrounding it. In addition, it has also produced "styles" or "wares" which give the impression of great investment in their creation and differentiation and raise questions about their associations, users and processes of production. It is now time to investigate the hypothesis that this impression of more and more complex decoration has a real, measurable component, and explore its social setting and correlates, in order to arrive at the root of this difference, through the study of specific deposits.

There are two components to this work, alternating between different methodologies and degrees of analytical resolution. The backbone of my research in Crete is made up by personal study of about 52,000 sherds kept in the Knossos Stratigraphic Museum, from a variety of deposits throughout the site's history, covering the full span of the second millennium up until the end of the Late Minoan (LM IIIC), expanding slightly beyond the range of the main project. This was an in-depth material analysis carried out by the author, the details to which will be outlined in the following, methodological, section.

Knossos is in some respects unique in the whole area covered by this project. It is a very long-lived site, with occupation from the Neolithic until the present time, and an unbroken sequence covering the whole of the second millennium. It is also the largest site on Crete, as well as the location of the largest palace. To that, we can add a long-lived history of research and excavation, and the combined result is the generation of an enormous quantity of material, of variable quality but still available for use. This covers specific deposits in the period of study that interests us here, from

different areas of the site, and which can be related to the history of increasing social complexity and the formation and changes of palatial hierarchies at Knossos. It is also very useful in the context of this project, because it offers the opportunity for a new level of detail, and exposes the full variation of the material, at the same time as presenting the challenge of dealing with it in a way that can be adapted and used for comparison with the published deposits. It brings to this research a strength in numbers, with a large amount of data and increased statistical validity, and allows us to focus on the changes in one, politically very active, site over time. This part of the study, therefore, focuses less on context, but at the same time, given that most of the significant samples are not directly associated with the palace, it is also useful as an alternative, society-wide rather than palace-focused view.

In parallel with this, I use published information from the remainder of the island, focusing especially on primary deposits, in order to delve deeper into three aspects of the material: firstly the associations with space and the activities that take place in it, secondly the observation of pottery vessels in a range of social contexts and, thirdly, to add an element of regional variation, which evades the dangers of a Knossos-centred approach and assists with explorations of varying social trajectories. The periods in which I have chosen to focus for the rest of the island are the Protopalatial and Neopalatial, spanning from 1950 to 1450 BC, and in ceramic terms covers the Middle Minoan and up to and including the Late Minoan I period. I will not repeat the changes and characteristics outlined in Chapter 4 here, but focus only on the ceramic sequence of Knossos in chronological order and assemblages from other sites inserted into this. In the data sections referring to each phase, I will first present the results of my study of samples from the Stratigraphic Museum, followed by the analysis of published deposits from Knossos, if available, and finally the published deposits from other sites. I begin this chapter with a detailed description of the methods used for study. The deposit by deposit analysis then follows. Subsequent to that, I will group some of the results of the analysis concerning the deposits and present them diachronically, in order to answer specific questions on how decoration changes over time. Then, I will engage with the relation of these ceramic deposits with the social developments of the period, including themes that mobilise a significant part of current research on the area, such as feasting, before drawing some initial conclusions that can then be explored comparatively in Chapter 9.

Methodology

In recent years, a series of very helpful specialist guides to the pottery of Knossos have been published (MacGillivray 1998; Momigliano 2007). These provided a useful starting point for the selection and identification of relevant deposits available at the Knossos Stratigraphic Museum, as well as for offering some initial information on their dating and characteristics. Further assemblages were also included in the study, based on the help and expertise of Todd Whitelaw, who secured the permission for their study from the excavators. The pottery stored in the Stratigraphic Museum comes from diverse excavations covering the entirety of the research history of the site, and the goal for the selection of an appropriate sample for this study was twofold. On the one hand, I aimed for large enough samples per phase, which were defined as a minimum of 1,000 sherds. The large size was necessary in order to ensure some diversity, but at the same time eliminate somewhat the random variation between contexts. On the other hand, in order to study the importance of decorated pottery as a component of deposits and work out reliable percentages of surface treatment, it was also important that at least a significant component of the sample was retained after excavation, and it represented the full range of sherds present at the original deposit. As the following sherd counts by phase show, the first target was usually exceeded:

MM IA: 1,302

MM IB: 2,343

MM I (undifferentiated): 1,721

MM IIA: 1,300

MM IIB: 926

MM II (undifferentiated): 2,596

MM IIIA: 4,095

MM IIIB: 2,954

MM III (undifferentiated): 1,187

MM IIIB/LM IA: 369

LM IA: 4,203

LM IB: 1,760 Pyrgos: 1,450

LM I (undifferentiated): 4,625

LM IB-II: 10,105

LM II: 4,552

LM II-IIIA1: 118

LM IIIA1: 818

LMIIIA2:2,648
LM IIIA (undifferentiated): 692

LM IIIB: 1,041

LM IIIC: 1,375

LM III (undifferentiated): 461

Total: 52, 641

In regards to the second target, the Representative Zembils collected during the excavation of the Royal Road South (hereafter RRS) and the Stratigraphic Museum Extention (SEX), both excavated by Peter Warren, were of especial importance, since both areas gave sequences spanning the Bronze Age occupation at Knossos, with deposits isolated for many specific periods. Deposits from the South-West Houses (SWH) excavated by Colin MacDonald were also unselected and equally valuable, covering a wide range of periods. Material from other excavations

was more limited to specific phases and these are introduced in the relevant sections of this chapter when I make use of their data. Finally, supplementary information was drawn from selected deposits, especially Evans' work around the palace, the Minoan Unexplored Mansion for the later periods and a selection of deposits from the Country House at LM IB Myrtos Pyrgos, which were also stored at the Stratigraphic Museum.

Before I move forward, I need to explain some of the wording used so far. Throughout this study, I use a series of terms in specific ways. For the sake of clarity, I am now going to offer a definition of each: starting from the most basic, when I am referring to a period, I mean a defined section of time. A phase, on the other hand, is a specific sub-division of the relative chronology, for example of Knossos, such as MM II. "Deposit", "assemblage" and "sample" are also core words. I use "assemblage" as the most general term, referring to any collection of pottery found together, at a scale which is then specified, i.e. site assemblage, or room assemblage. Deposit is more specific and implies a close contextual relationship: a group of sherds or vessels which were found and recovered together, usually also assumed to have been deposited together, although behavioural integrity cannot always be certain, i.e. in the case of accumulated dumps. Sample is any assemblage or deposit which has been selected for study, the selection being here the significant factor.

Beyond these general terms, there is also a series of ways in which I have chosen to refer specifically to the components of this study. A very basic distinction is between selected and unselected deposits. By this I mean those from which pottery was thrown away before storage in the Stratigraphic Museum, and those where all sherds were retained regardless of their characteristics. A particular kind of unselected deposit were the 'Representative Zembils', which are all the results of a strategy adopted in Peter Warren's excavations, such that from some zembils in each trench everything was kept. In addition to the Selected/Unselected division, there are also those that were designated as 'Problematic Deposits'. In their case, there were either doubts about the selection status or the dating was unclear — in either case they required multiple examinations before decisions were made concerning their characterisation.

Finally, a series of terms were created during the analysis of the deposits in order to clearly specify. A Representative Sample is the sample which is created by

the amalgamation of all the unselected deposits from any single phase. These are one of the core sources of information and their composition is the main way I track changes through time. They are also used for comparative purposes to show the distinction from the problematic deposits. In terms of categories of surface treatment, there is the full range which was used for analysis (Full Categories) and the categories that are used for the presentation of the results (Simplified Categories), both of which are explained later in this section.

The sherds from the boxes chosen for study were strewn and categorized according to fabric coarseness (fine, semi-coarse, coarse and cooking), sherd size, and vessel shape, in addition to surface treatments. The shape categories were designed to be simple, and therefore easily identifiable on the basis of fragmentary material, but still giving an impression of the possible functions. All sherds were therefore identified as coming from small, medium or storage vessels, open or closed. Cooking vessels were recorded separately, and a distinct category was dedicated to conical cups, defined as the mostly plain, mass-produced type starting from MM III onwards. The categories of surface treatment used are those applied to all case studies (see Chapter 3). A clearly defined system such as this was a great help in decision-making, although it must be kept in mind that assignation to categories was, in the end, still a matter of personal judgement, and often had to be made on the basis of only a fraction of the original design. Any decoration that referred to something recognizable from the natural world was designated as representational, while the complexity of both geometric and representational designs was based on a quick, personal estimation of the effort invested in them as well as on their visual properties. Finally, before the actual study season, this recording system was tested on a selection of sherds from Knossos kept in the British Museum and revised.

The resulting data were entered into a spreadsheet, which was used for all related sorting, simple statistical calculations and the creation of graphics. An initial phase of the study included an analysis of deposits covering all phases which were clearly dated and for which it was certain that no pottery had been thrown away by the excavator, particularly all the representative zembils collected from the SEX and RRS excavations. The composition of those deposits gave the first picture of the variability through time and the possible direction changes could take. At the next stage, these

samples were amalgamated according to phase in order to gain larger sample sizes and a clearer and more stable impression of each period. At this stage only the fine pottery was taken into account, since the goal was to follow the chronological divisions and fine pottery is more sensitive to changes. Additionally, it helped avoid the methodological problems of using sherd assemblages of mixed fabrics and sizes and, as discussed in Chapter 3, it gave a more representative count for decoration percentages. The categories of surface treatment were also slightly simplified for greater facility in presentation and reading of the results, through the grouping together of some surface treatments: all monochrome banded decoration was treated together, with no division between simple and complex, while polychrome banded decoration was combined with simple geometric polychrome decoration to create a "simple polychrome" group.

The next stage, following the clarification of different phases, was the consideration of more problematic deposits and the assessment of which could be used, and in what ways. Particularly important were those that covered or boosted periods which were weakly represented so far in the representative samples, as well as those that offered an impression of the period which differed from the one seen in the samples studied until then. This phase of the study led to a reconsideration of the aggregate samples by phase, and the creation of new representative samples for some phases, with the addition of further data, when study showed that some of the problematic samples were actually probably unselected. Finally, the last stage was targeted to answering more specific questions, those addressed in separate sub-sections, and it involved the analysis of the semi-coarse pottery through time (which is very useful for interpretative, if not chronological purposes); the assessment of complexity in pottery decoration in broad terms through time; the analysis of a comparative set of deposits from LM IB Myrtos Pyrgos; and finally the detailed presentation of targeted deposits, taking into account the full range of variables recorded (Appendix B).

For the selection of sites to study in the publication-based section, it is clear that to some degree the possibilities are dictated by what has been published and how, but at this point this will be considered a given, and specific problems due to lack of data or affecting distribution will be discussed in relation to the relevant sites as they

arise. However, to the degree that it was possible, I have chosen deposits from a wide variety of sites (see fig. 5.1), including palatial, non-palatial (the lines between which are always a matter of discussion in Minoan archaeology) and smaller ones. I have also tried to cover diverse regions of the island, with their own practices. It was more problematic to find suitable funerary and explicitly sacred or religious contexts, so most of the emphasis is on domestic sites. Within the selected sites and contexts, information was extracted from publications on the basis of the principles and methods outlined in Chapter 3.

The Protopalatial Period

MMI

Samples from the Stratigraphic Museum

Starting in chronological order, for MM I it was decided to combine all deposits into one group, with no division between A and B, since most of the existing material is not dated at that level of precision, and additionally, there does not seem to be a lot of variation within the period (but see below for one exception). All the unselected deposits that have been used to study the composition of this group come from Warren's representative zembils from both the RRS and the SEX excavations, taking into account fine pottery only (see Table 5.1 and Charts 5.1-3). The surface treatment categories used in the analysis are the simplified ones. In the MM I deposits, monochrome pottery is by far the most common (81.5%), followed by smoothed/slipped (9.6%). Decorated pottery is 7.7% of the total with painted banded decoration comprising 5% (see fig. 5.2). Bands are followed by relief-incised decoration (13.3% of the decorated, 1% of the total). This makes sense in this period, since barbotine decoration has been categorized as relief, and is especially associated with MMI (see figs. 5.3 and 5.4). There is no complex or representational decoration, and the last three categories are, in order of frequency, trickle-splatter, simple polychrome and simple geometric monochrome. We therefore see overall that bands dominate, relief decoration is also relatively common, due to the use of barbotine, and polychromy has started to appear, mostly in very simple forms, such as horizontal or vertical bands, with added white.

There are also some more problematic assemblages to consider, specifically from Evans' excavations (Test Pits 3 and 4) from the West Square Kamares Area, which date to MM IB. The combined sample gives a decoration percentage of 27.8%. This seems to be very high, in the light of the above picture, and could be attributed to selection. There is, however, an interesting fact in looking at the composition of this deposit: aside from the fact that many categories, especially the decorated ones, are more frequent than expected, the ratio of decorative treatments actually shares more similarities with MM II than MM I, especially due to the higher proportion of polychrome to relief-incised decoration, not to mention the presence of categories such as representation, which do not appear yet in the unselected MM I deposits. These results lead to the question as to whether there would indeed be sense in dividing the MM I material into A and B, if more high quality data were available for the second period, based on the suggestion that MM IB is more similar to the following period than the preceding one, a characteristic which cannot be attributed to selection alone (although it is not possible to rule out the possibility that material from different periods got mixed during the excavation of the Test Pits). The primary value of these groups therefore is to demonstrate that it is likely that the characteristics seen in the unselected deposits which comprise the representative sample might be closer to the beginning of the MM I period, and that they do not remain constant until the end, which is more similar to the period that follows.

Published deposits

Knossos

Published information is available for some of the more recent excavations, which gives us a fuller impression of the assemblages of the period in context and allows cross-referencing with the deposits studied in person. A series of destruction deposits from the Old Palace period has been excavated from 1987 in the area of the Early Magazine A and the south-west houses and published in great detail by Macdonald and Knappett. Moreover, personal examination of the material gave me the opportunity to ascertain that this has been indeed fully published to the best quality possible.

Deposit A, in the area of the Early Magazine A, dates to MMIB and it was formed after destruction by fire of an area where pottery vessels were kept, possibly a

cupboard. The area is slightly disturbed by the construction of a wall at a later date and the activities of Evans. The composition of the assemblage is very interesting and it is detailed in Table 5.2 and Chart 5.4 (MacDonald and Knappett 2007: 3-8; 161-162). About 95% of the pottery is pouring and drinking vessels, and an hierarchical structure has been observed among these: the plainer and simpler ones are more numerous, while their quantity decreases as they become finer and more elaborate. The overall presence of complex treatments (see Table 5.3 and Chart 5.5) is much stronger than usual for unselected deposits, mostly owing to the prevalence of polychromy in the deposits, which can be combined with rarity in shape and investment in manufacture to create vessels that stand out even further, such as the carinated cup with tall rim (see fig. 5.5). A similar relation between quality and quantity as can be seen with the cups has been suggested for bridge-spouted jars (see fig. 5.6). One problem with the suggestion of an hierarchical structure within the open shapes (which will be revisited later) is that the entire deposit does not survive (the existing part is estimated at 65-85% of the original), requiring the assumption that the disturbance removed a random sample.

Deposit B is a primary collapse deposit, accompanied by plaster, which could have fallen from a higher floor (Macdonald and Knappett 2007: 9-12; 165). Its contents are detailed in Tables 5.4 and 5.5 and Charts 5.6 and 5.7. Polychrome decoration is mostly found on closed shapes, one of which, a tall piriform jar (see fig. 5.7), is an import from the Mesara. On the whole, this assemblage is pretty evenly divided between drinking, pouring and medium-scale liquid storage vessels, with drinking being only slightly more represented. The excavators consider it a household assemblage and it can be noted that despite its socially "intermediate" character, there are pieces that stand out. This social characterisation and its material correlates are very interesting, which Deposit D, discussed below, helps us engage with further.

Deposit D (Deposit C has been excluded from this discussion, since it is a fill) was found north of the space where B was (SVII5) and it comes from destruction material from the inside of a house, which was close to the palace but does not seem to have been directly associated with it. The overall impression offered by the objects was that it did not seem to be of elite character and the quality of the pottery is characterised in the publication as "mundane" (Macdonald and Knappett 2007: 12-15;

166-67). This is useful, because it gives the opportunity to study an assemblage none of whose characteristics has been flagged as outstanding (see Table 5.6). However, as with Deposit B, identifying it as domestic on that basis alone is dangerously close to a circular argument that does not further the understanding of the deposit's character. Aside from decoration, there are other arguments pointing at a household assemblage, when the full spectrum of the deposits, beyond ceramics is considered, including groundstone tools, such as querns, pounders and a whetstone. The functional profile of the pottery also shows almost the full spectrum of household pottery, being about 71% cups and goblets, 11% pouring shapes, 4.8% storage and including some examples of cooking vessels. The study of the surface treatments (see Table 5.7 and Charts 5.8 and 5.9) shows elaborate examples (see figs. 5.8 and 5.9) of polychromy, imitation of stone surfaces, as well as an impressed eggshell cup. In both Deposits described as intermediate, the percentages of the presence of decoration are similar (26.7% for B and 25% for D) and so is the percentage of elaborate decoration (6.7% and 5% respectively), quantities which much are lower than Deposit A, but remain high.

There are two analytical potentials suggested by this data. On the one hand, if these really are average household assemblages, we might be seeing the difference between palatial and non-palatial deposits. In this case, the existence of elaborate decorated vessels has interesting implications for social access to this material, and it is useful to compare the percentages of their presence to that of other sites, leading to information on whether the unique scale of Knossos has implications for the general standard of material life on the site, and the potential for the creation of elaborate objects. On the other, if we do not accept the interpretation of these as not outstanding assemblages, and therefore do not exclude a palatial association, these might demonstrate the range of appearances a palatial deposit can take. One way to approach this, and offer an answer, is to take the Representative Sample studied from the Stratigraphic Museum for the period as the "baseline" for Knossos, and compare those with the Early Magazine and South-West Houses deposits (only in general terms, because we are comparing an aggregate sample made up of sherds to a primary deposit of complete vessels): this comparison shows that the percentage of decoration is closer to Deposits B and D, but these deposits still appear to have more decoration that average in the period, showing that the impression of less decoration in only due

to comparison with the exceptionally high Deposit A. Deposits B and D are fully within the range of palace-associated deposits (as demonstrated by the MMIB sample studied from Evans' excavations), and we cannot determine the character of the houses based on that information alone. There are however other indications, especially the houses' architectural characteristics and their other contents, that reinforce the non-palatial interpretation. Either way, the conclusion we can draw is that the quantity of decoration in palatial and non-palatial deposits is close enough to be practically indistinguishable, but if there is a difference, it can be located in the complexity of decoration and in the structure of assemblages intended to serve specific functions and occasions.

Based on the data at hand, it is not possible at the moment to rule out that there was a difference between palatial and non-palatial contexts in the Protopalatial period in the complexity of decoration, and indeed the former seem to have a higher degree of elaboration, both as seen in the Stratigraphic Museum and as described in the literature (MacGillivray 1998: 24-46). It is not helpful, however, that most of the palatial groups, including the samples from the Stratigraphic Museum, come after destructions and cleaning operations on the palaces and have been excavated and selected at the time by Evans, while the non-palatial deposits show unselected pottery in all its glory, further emphasizing the divide. There is no evidence so far for other elite sectors beyond the Palace that could have interacted with it and been part of different processes of negotiation, playing for example an equivalent role to Quartier Mu at Malia (MacDonald 2012: 109-111). It is interesting to note that in many areas, concentrated change can be seen in MM IB-II, such as an explosion in settlement size (Whitelaw 2012: 141-150), but no corresponding dramatic change is visible in the kind of pottery that is found in secondary non-palatial deposits, although a small peak in complex decoration can perhaps be supported, as I will show.

Kommos

Kommos (see fig. 5.10) is a harbour town which is often associated with Phaistos and its palace. Only a small number of contexts have been dated to MMIA, but in MMIB the site expands and many more ceramic deposits have been found and published.

Betancourt (1990: 28-29) remarks that decoration is limited and when it exists it is cursory or conservative, with barbotine being typical of the period. Apart from the general account of developments in the site pottery, detailed descriptions of deposits have also been published.

Context 6 is a homogeneous fill of MMIB date in spaces 26-27 in the Central Hillside, where 600 sherds were found, 215 of them diagnostic (Betancourt 1990: 68-70; 201-202). It would be useful to add here a note of caution: assuming that most decorated sherds would be considered diagnostic, it is likely that decoration will be seriously over-represented in percentages based on diagnostics only, when no specification is offered. In these cases however, they can still be informative on the relative frequencies of decorative treatments as well as in comparison to other percentages based on diagnostics. Additionally, independent sources of information occasionally permit the evaluation of the reliability of estimates made on the basis of diagnostics, and these will always be discussed, if available. In Context 6, a minimum of 77-86 vessels are recognised, and the minimum numbers have been used in the estimation of decoration. In this case, both statistical tables and a catalogue are provided in the publication. The statistical tables, offering estimates on the minimum number of vessels, have been used to estimate the overall quantity of decoration and shapes present, while the catalogue has been used to refine the composition of the 'decorated' category (see Tables 5.8 and 5.9 and Charts 5.10 and 5.11). Also, to facilitate comparison between pottery catalogues of diagnostics, complex decoration has been calculated as a percentage of decoration (15% in this case), as well as a percentage of the whole (2.6%). However, because not all decoration types are distinguished as separate categories in the statistical tables, it is likely that the percentage of decoration is an underestimate in this case.

Context 8, also in the Central Hillside, is the fill beneath the floor of space 38, consisting of small and broken up sherds (Betancourt 1990: 73-75; 204-205). The percentage of barbotine decoration among the diagnostic sherds is 7%, showing consistency, and as in the previous deposit the decoration (16.7%, very likely a more severe understatement based on comparison with the catalogue) is simple, only 1.7% of which in the statistical table can be considered elaborate (consisting of a complex version of barbotine, Barnacle Work), but going up to 16.7% of all decorated vessels

in the catalogue, which brings this deposit to the same range as the previous one (see fig. 5.11 and Tables 5.10 and 5.11, Chart 5.12).

MMII

Samples from the Stratigraphic Museum

In MM II, all of the deposits, with the exception of Trial KV (which contained some of the most elaborate examples from a possibly representative deposit among the semi-coarse pottery) are representative zembils from the SEX excavations from 1981 and 1982, Trench F, dated generally to MM II. These samples were of variable size. At the initial examination of the deposit, I only chose those that were large enough (defined at the time as having more than 100 fine sherds), but for the final stage all were combined. More support for the conclusion that the sub-division by zembil in this case would be meaningless comes from the fact that a join was found between sherds from different zembils, with non-adjacent numbers. Finally, the assertion that the addition of the smaller zembils in the aggregate sample is valid and only strengthens the sample size was supported by a comparison of the original deposits and those which were added at the second stage. The overall composition of the sample in regards to surface treatment is similar to MMI in RRS and SEX, with the same three treatments being most common (see Table 5.12 and Charts 5.13-15). The greatest differences from the previous period can be found in the decorated category. The overall percentage of decoration increases to 11.8% and there is much greater diversity, with all potential decoration categories being represented. Bands are still the most common treatment, but reduced to 51% of decoration (although they have increased to 6% of the total material, due to the overall increase in decoration). Simple geometric monochrome decoration follows, and simple polychrome is nearly as common (see fig. 5.12). The relief-incised category is much reduced, trickle is at similar levels to the previous phase, and complex and representational decoration are both present (see fig. 5.13). Overall, we see an increase in diversity and complexity of decoration, accompanied by an increase in polychromy and a decline of barbotine and relief.

A more troublesome group from the same period comes from Evans' excavations at the North-East Kamares Area (NEKA). Most of these boxes gave the impression of being heavily selected (see fig. 5.14). In their combined examination,

the percentage of decoration is once again too high, as expected, but the internal ratios of the decorative treatments seem to agree more or less with the unselected representative sample, once that selection is factored in. As expected, polychromy is much more common than in the reference deposits (nearly 30% compared to close to 15%, so roughly double) and the most common surface treatment is simple geometric patterns, instead of bands. Another interesting feature, beyond the alterations brought by researcher intervention, are the characteristics that are constant, or at least more similar, between the representative and the NEKA samples, namely complex decoration. Representational decoration roughly doubles in the selected sample, as would be expected, but complex decoration remains at the same levels, and even slightly decreases. This could indicate that this is more or less the treatment's "natural" frequency in the assemblage, the upper limit, so to speak, of the highest level of elaboration, in this period: the reason the proportion of complex decoration is not higher in the selected samples is simply because there were no more such sherds to be selected.

Published deposits

Kommos

MMIIA is well represented at the site, with new kinds of decoration, including elements associated with Kamares, as well as a dramatic increase in the use of the wheel and changes in the relative percentages of shapes. Context 9 (Betancourt 1990: 75-78; 206-207) belongs to this period and is a fill in spaces 35-36, sealed beneath a floor and with no further intrusions. A characteristic of the assemblage noted by Betancourt is the coexistence of fine decorated pottery and vessels in cooking fabrics, either because contents of different areas were mixed at deposition or because the vases were already in the same place. Some 245 diagnostic sherds were recovered from a minimum of 70-83 pots. The most varied decoration (see Tables 5.13 and 5.14 and Charts 5.16 and 5.17), with polychromy and floral motifs, is found on carinated cups and bridge-spouted jars (see fig. 5.15). In the statistical table provided in the publication, decoration is not accurately represented, but there is very good correspondence between the catalogue and the table, permitting a cross reference for most vessels counted and resulting in a reliable count. Only the vessels numbered in the statistical table have been included in Table 5.14 in order to avoid duplication, and

all vessels in the table that are not included in the catalogue have been assigned to the Plain category. This gives an overall percentage of decoration at about 27%, which is in the range of Context 6, but, more importantly, around 7% of all vessels and 42% of decorated vessels have more elaborate decoration, an impressive leap from the previous period. Having no indication of any difference in the nature of the deposit, it is reasonable to assume that this difference is due to changing ceramic practices from period to period: the features mentioned above, such as the introduction of Kamares-like characteristics, have therefore an observable effect on the composition of ceramic assemblages on the site, in the same period as the use of the ceramic wheel intensifies, an association to which I will return.

MMIIB is the best-known protopalatial phase at Kommos, and a large percentage of the deposits can be attributed to it. In the previous phases no evidence for destructions was found, but in this one the evidence is uncertain. On the one hand the large amount of fill indicates that it is likely, but there are no clear destruction deposits with complete vases (Betancourt 1990: 33-34). The fine pottery of the period is what is considered typical of Kamares, with many elaborately painted vessels, great variation in the motifs, their arrangement and execution, many of them being one of a kind. Over 95% of the handled cups found, the majority belonging to three types, were painted. Much of this pottery is considered identical to that at Phaistos, although Kommos is not considered a "palatial" site, raising questions about the nature of the relationship between the two sites, as well as the differences in the creation of ceramic practices and the organization of production and acquisition in palatial and non-palatial sites. The discovery of kiln wasters is evidence for the production of pottery at Kommos at this time. Contexts from this period, such as Context 13, stratified just above Context 9, show examples of vessels with very fine walls and elaborate polychrome decoration (see figs. 5.16 and 5.17), but disturbances and partial presentation make the calculation of meaningful quantities impossible. At least in the category of fine vessels, there is a consistent combination of drinking and pouring vessels making up most of the decorated, and particularly the elaborate, examples (as seen also in Context 9), a characteristic that recurs in other sites and will be discussed in a following section.

Malia

For the Protopalatial period, the site of Malia offers very interesting and thoroughly published information in the form of assemblages from Quartier Mu, a section of the town including two substantial houses and their annexes (see figs. 5.18, 5.19 and 5.20). These buildings' architectural characteristics and contents are associated with an elite way of life and they are spatially associated with a series of workshops, including that of a potter (Watrous 1994; Poursat and Knappett 2005: 1-2). These were destroyed by fire at the end of the Protopalatial period, leaving deposits and architectural contexts in good condition and well-dated to MMIIB. This gives the possibility to study the distribution of different pottery types and decoration in the building, although more quantitative information is only limited to specific deposits where a large number of complete or mostly complete examples were found in their original context.

Most of the deposits where a large number of vessels were found *in situ* belonged to one of two types, either magazines or cupboards, frequently located under staircases, where pottery was stored when not in use. There were also deposits formed by the contents of a higher floor collapsing, in some cases reflecting more or less the contents of a room with similar design to the one below. One of the most characteristic examples of spaces dedicated to storage is in Building A, where three such rooms, I5, I6 and I7 have been preserved with their contents in place (Poursat and Knappett 2005: 158-160; 250). The last of the three rooms, I7, is equipped with both benches and drains and the majority of vessels are jars (see Table 5.15). The detailed presentation of the contents (see Table 5.16 and Chart 5.18) of the room shows 70% of those are decorated, usually with simple Dark-on-Light bands, disks and circles (see fig. 5.21). The capacity of all three rooms is estimated at around 1,000L and although the majority of vessels in all of them belong to the general category of “storage shapes”, there are differences in the capacity as well as the distribution of shapes, with pithoi only present in I5 and I6, while jars are mostly found in I7. The specific usage of room I7 aside, it is notable that, despite the very high numbers of simply decorated vessels, there is a complete absence of more elaborate decoration. Keeping in mind the function of the space, it can be compared to deposits of a different nature and the presence or absence of elaborate decoration in these, in order to start approaching the role of elaboration through the situations in which it appears most strongly.

The ceramic contents of magazines are not limited to storage vessels, but they often also include caches of tableware, either placed there because they were used in association with the products or because the location provided a convenient connection to the site of consumption. One such example is Room I16, containing storage vessels of a total capacity around 300L, as well as a collection of serving vessels, the majority of them jugs, probably originally arranged on shelves on the walls (see fig. 5.22) (Poursat and Knappett 2005: 160-165; 254). The composition of the deposit is detailed in Table 5.17. Again, more than half of the pottery contents (54%) are decorated. The majority of the quantity of decoration comes from the closed vessels, but in this case there is a limited presence of more complex and representational decoration (see Table 5.18 and Chart 5.19), which is filly consistent with a primary function as a storage space with a more limited inclusion of serving vessels.

From these assemblages, we can transition to others of different character. One of the largest deposits (seen in Tables 5.19 and 5.20 and Chart 5.20) of table vessels is in Magazine III17, where many cups were found arranged in piles, fallen from the floor above (Poursat and Knappett 2005: 165; 170; 268). The overall percentage of decorated pottery in this deposit is under question due to an unclear point in the catalogue: the majority of the cups, which make up most of the deposit, are listed as a lot under a category of simple Light-on-Dark decoration with crescents around the rim (see fig. 5.23). It has been decided therefore to assign these to the category of 'Simple Geometric', but a degree of uncertainty remains. If the assignation is correct, however, the proportion of decoration is extremely high (c. 93%). However, once again the most interesting feature is elaborate decoration, staying at a very low rate of 1.6%. In a collection with uniform function such as this, it becomes even more obvious how the overall simplicity and uniformity of the large number of cups with simple decoration allows the limited number of elaborate vessels to truly stand out, such as the single tripod cup, which also has polychrome decoration. Additionally, the existence of simple decoration on the majority of the drinking cups is also significant: even though in this case decoration is not used as a means of creating display and difference, there is still a degree of investment in the equipment used by a larger number of people.

As I noted above, another kind of deposit where large quantities of pottery are found in their original context are small spaces, described by the excavators as cupboards, where it was stored, probably stacked on shelves. The contents can vary, but usually they contain tableware, unlike the storage or mixed assemblages from the magazines (see figs. 5.24 and 5.25). Compartment III7, for example, is under staircase IIIB and right next to room III8. It is notable, not just for its contents but also for the fact that a large tray is inserted in the floor at the centre, suggesting that the deposit could be connected to food preparation, as well as the equipment for serving food and drink (see Table 5.21 and Chart 5.21), and it is mentioned here because, despite the small number of vessels, it repeats the pattern seen in III17 of high rates of simple geometric decoration and hints of differentiation through the use of tripod cups (of which there are two, both decorated). The same pattern is repeated in niche I3a, southeast of Room I3, which mostly contains pouring and drinking shapes, including a majority of cups with the now-familiar crescents on the rim, and a limited number of vessels standing out, in this case two dippers, one with appearance imitating stone and another possibly depicting fish (Poursat and Knappett 2005: 169; 249).

These dippers, typically decorated with marine painted or applied motifs, are found rarely and almost exclusively in Building A. They are never found in large numbers and they are usually in the same spaces as drinking cups. These characteristics have led to the hypothesis that they played a part in elite life, perhaps in connection with extracting and transferring a specific amount of some substance, and suggesting a link with official administrative activities (Poursat and Knappett 2005: 189). Building A also contains the majority of groups of table vessels, which have very consistent compositions similar to those described above, comprising mostly of pouring and drinking vessels. This repetition of similar groups of vessels from one room to the other suggests also the repetition of practices, frequent and carried out in a specified manner by the people having access to the building.

All the contexts described so far reflect storage or secondary deposits but give little indications of the actual location of use. Room III4, however, is considered a likely area of consumption, with benches on three sides and the material found not in storage, but in three concentrations distributed around the room. The pottery itself is also interesting, especially in light of the patterns already suggested from the analysis

of stored collections of vessels (Poursat and Knappett 2005: 173; 261). A total of 65 vessels are recorded from the room, 80% of which are cups, the three tripod. All the remaining shapes are for pouring, with the exception of a single jar, showing a strong orientation towards the serving and consumption of liquids. The characterisation of the surface treatments (see Table 5.22 and Chart 5.22) suffers from the same problem as in III17, but again, if we assume that a 'lot' refers to a group that has the same characteristics, we have once again a very large proportion of decorated vessels (92%), the vast majority painted with simple motifs. In this case there is also a higher percentage of elaborate decoration, around 6%, usually found on painted hemispherical cups, which could in this case adopt the role of the outstanding object on display (Poursat and Knappett 2005: 189).

Overall, in the context of Quartier Mu and Mallia in general, Building A seems to stand out. In terms of content and architectural elaboration, Building B is also an elite residence, but there are differences. As noted above, some categories of pottery, such as dippers, are found exclusively in Building A. Its total storage capacity is also much greater and in addition to that it contains the vast majority of conical cups. The distribution of other shapes differs as well. This, in combination with the high number of transport and storage vessels imported from the Mirabello area (Poursat and Knappett 2005: 199-200), has led to the suggestion that it played an important economic role, perhaps including the importation, storage and redistribution of products. The recurring groups of pottery for the serving and consumption of food and drink could also be related to the same process of distribution, not in the sense that they themselves were the objects of trade, but because they were involved in the social occasions the functions of the building entailed, where the status of the inhabitants and visitors was being negotiated and reinforced through multiple material means, including precisely the kind of assemblage that we have repeatedly encountered.

Phaistos

The other major centre in the Protopalatial period is the palace of Phaistos, excavated in 1900-1909 by Halbherr and Pernier and since 1950 by the Italian Archaeological School at Athens. At the moment very little detailed information exists concerning specific deposits. Some indication of the general character of the pottery can be

offered by comparisons with the port of Kommos (Walberg 1983: 95-96). Although no quantifiable information is available, the data on the contexts of some of the most impressive and elaborate vessels found in the Protopalatial period (Levi 1964: 3-10) permit the drawing of parallels with Knossos, suggesting spatial relationships between the palace and the most elaborate of the ceramic material. It is also useful that in Phaistos more of the phases of the First Palace survive, since some rooms were not directly built over in the Neopalatial period. Room XXVII was a basement filled with objects on benches and in organic containers such as cupboards, which included among others an impressive polychrome pithos as well as "eggshell-ware" cups imitating metal vessels (see fig. 5.26). Fine pottery was also discovered in other areas of the palace, such as LI, a storage space under a staircase, similar to those described from other sites. Polychrome pottery with elaborate decoration was also found in room LIV, interpreted as a bedroom. The palace of Phaistos was also the findplace of one of the most famous Kamares vessels, a polychrome fruit-stand with added plastic flowers. It was found in a storage space under a staircase, in room LV, along with a plate with a simple pictorial motif (see figs. 5.27 and 5.28). We might therefore not know the exact contents of the rooms of the palace, but there are some important pieces of information that will come up again later, such as the impressive richness and experimentation of design in this period and the presence of some of the finest pottery in the palaces, as well as of pottery imitating metal.

Monastiraki Katalimata

This is a small site situated in a very inaccessible location in eastern Crete, which acted as a refuge in historic periods. A brief description of the pottery is included here not because of its size, importance, or as a representative sample, but to give an idea of the diversity of the contexts where decorated pottery is found. In 1993 one of the terraces that made up the settlement was excavated, producing material from a MM II occupation (Nowicki 2002). This included a very thin floor deposit, surviving in patches of soil. The largest ceramic group was a chronologically homogeneous dump to the east of House C, containing hundreds of sherds and complete or restorable small vessels. It included a range of shapes, the majority of them cups but also larger, very fragmentary, vessels. Only a selection, characterised by Nowicki as representative, was published in 2002, covering all the basic categories of cups, jugs,

jars, pithoi and cooking pots. Many of them had simple decoration (see figs. 5.29 and 5.30), with the exception of the cooking pots, and the fabric and shapes have very close parallels to the nearby sites of Gournia, Pseira and Vasiliki.

The excavators interpret the rank of the inhabitants as high, based on the characteristics of the deposit: the fine and decorated pottery, an inscribed Chamaizi pot and a stone vase. They hypothesise that the site was occupied by people of a high status from a nearby community in the Mirabello Bay who were trying to avoid disturbances in the area at the end of the Protopalatial period, giving it a similar function as the one it had in later periods. The interesting implication of the suggested interpretation is the link between fine, well-made and decorated pottery (three characteristics that are not always found together) and an elite status, as well as the implication that these people would have carried with them part of a way of life, and that the pottery involved in daily activities would have been a way of sustaining that. The acceptance of this interpretation, intriguing as it might be, hinges on considering the pottery sufficient evidence for an elite status. However, the fact that it is decorated alone is not enough to support the assertion — a comparison with contexts whose associations with social status can be ascertained from multiple lines of evidence, such as Quartier Mu, Phaistos or palace-related deposits in Knossos shows that these contain not only decoration (which we have already started to see is ubiquitous) but also indications of further elaboration on that decoration, which is lacking here. What can be safely argued from Monastiraki-Katalimata, therefore, is not that decorated pottery is a way of transmitting an elite way of life, because the evidence for that is lacking, but instead that simple decoration is a part of everyday life to such a degree that it is included in material life even under the influence of external pressures, such as the transport of material to a remote location under stressful conditions.

The Neopalatial Period

MMIII

Samples from the Stratigraphic Museum

MM III has been divided into two phases, but for many of the deposits used, the identification of the phase they belong to was done mostly in terms of relatively earlier or later in the period. It would therefore be better to describe the groups as

"MM III early" and "MM III late", and this has been adopted provisionally here. In early MM III, an immediate and strong impression is the large increase in the number of sherds from simply smoothed or self-slipped vessels (43.1%), which are now as common as monochrome ones (43.2%)[6]. Despite the initial impression, when the full combined sample (See Table 5.23 and Charts 5.23-25) was studied, a slight increase was actually noted in the presence of decoration (found on 12.4 % of all sherds). Some doubts and problems in relation to the initial aggregate sample could possibly be related to the observation made at the time of study that the majority of the sample (658 sherds) consisted of small and broken up pieces, something that might have a bearing on the result. When a deposit from the SWH was added (which was initially excluded due to unwarranted fears of partial overlap) this resulted in a larger final representative sample, with characteristics differing from the original, especially in the realm of decoration which had initially seemed decreased, but now has been shown to actually increase slightly in that period.

Not only is decoration more common than expected, on the basis of the relevant literature, in this period, but it also seems to be more complex in general. There were, however, still many common elements between the two SWH samples, such as a strong presence of complex geometric decoration (14.5% of the decorated) as well as trickle-splatter (13%) and small numbers of polychrome sherds remaining, a combination which seems to characterise the period (see figs. 5.31 and 5.32). The increase in complexity is mostly an indication of the presence of tortoiseshell-ripple, which starts appearing in the deposits in this period, and despite its impression of simplicity, with plain vertical lines (and burnishing), it would actually require effort in careful application over the surface, as well as skill in achieving the effect, and has therefore been categorised as complex. The result was a reinforcement of the impression that early MM III is not a phase of simplification and decrease in decoration, but the period when the trends that really take off in LMIA are introduced.

From the same period there is also a large collection of boxes from Evans' excavations at the House of the Sacrificed Oxen (Southern Polychrome Deposits). In terms of selection, its most obvious aspect was the absence of hastily made smoothed

[6] Some caution is necessary, since all of this sample comes from the combined SW Houses deposits, which might have a character of their own, and these characteristics might be related to the specific deposit and not the period in general.

cups. The deposit's internal distribution looks very similar to that of the representative sample from the same period, with the exception of the absence of smoothed-slipped sherds, which should have been present in large numbers. This has very interesting implications for the deposit and its informational potential as a distinct sample. In terms of differences from the representative sample, it has all those that were identified as markers of selection in previous deposits: higher proportions of polychrome pottery and simple geometric decoration, while lower levels of banded decoration (not to mention the higher overall percentage of decorated pottery). It is not clear if all these differences can be attributed to selection and whether some are genuine characteristics of the deposit (for example a higher proportion of polychrome pottery would not be possible had the polychromy not been present in the first place). It could be therefore indicative of early MM III practices in combination with selection. Another interesting feature is the high number of sherds with trickle-splatter decoration, something comparable with other deposits from the same period, partly due to the prevalence of white-spotted decoration which was applied by splattering and not careful spotting.

In MM III late, the sample is a combination of deposits from the Acropolis Houses (which will be revisited in context in the following section) and representative zembils from the RRS, including one which was initially identified as MMIIIB/LMIA, but is now recognized to be MM III. This is the first phase in which conical cups appear in more significant numbers in the Representative Samples, but a comparison of the analysis carried out with and without them shows that they do not seem to affect the proportions of surface treatments in the deposit in any significant way, which is interesting in comparison with deposits from the LM I period, which will be examined later. In terms of the overall composition of the sample, variability seems strong in terms of the numbers of popular types. Previously, one type of surface treatment dominated (or two in the case of MM III early), with the rest following very far behind. Now, however, although a monochrome surface is still the most common, followed by a smoothed one, banded, simple geometric and complex decoration have also a significant enough presence that they can be picked up from their representation in the whole sample (See Table 5.24 and Charts 5.26-28).

Moving forward to the representation of different types of decoration, we notice first that the overall percentage is much higher, at 27% of the whole. Of this, a little less than half (46.8%) is banded and the two following types of decoration are simple geometric monochrome (27.4%) and complex (17.4%), which as I already mentioned, are also significant presences not just internally for the decorated category, but for the entire sample (see fig. 5.33). The sherds with complex decoration are almost exclusively decorated with tortoiseshell-ripple. This gives the impression of an expansion or intensification of the trends observed in the previous sample, with the lower percentages there being a feature of the earlier period. From this point of view, the early MM III is not just a period that is poor in decoration, but the beginning of the intensification that we see later in the same period. In addition to these three major categories of decoration, all other treatments are present but in smaller numbers.

Published deposits

Knossos

The Minoan Unexplored Mansion was published by Popham *et al*. in 1984. The majority of the deposits date to LMIII, but there are also remains of the late MMIII and LMIA phases. The best preserved of those contexts is in the southern corridor (Popham *et al.*, 1984: 151-154), deposited at two successive stages. The material from the latest stages, of advanced LMIA, is definitely deposited after the construction of the Mansion and is more fragmentary than the earlier material but the overall percentage of decorated pottery of 'good quality' increases as does the range of motifs and the occurrence of representational decoration, such as reed patterns, foliate bands and the imitation of conglomerate stone (Popham *et al*.1984: 153-158).

To add to this more general data, we can use reports of more recent excavations published in the *ABSA* (see for example Warren 1991 for a deposit found during the Stratigraphic Museum excavations). The deposit presented here refers to trials excavated in 1975 in the Houses by the Acropolis (600m from the palace) after extensive disturbance by ploughing (Catling *et al.* 1979, for dating see Hatzaki 2007a: 155), and it is one of the few cases in this research where it has been possible to directly compare the published information to that from the excavated deposits, which were stored at the Stratigraphic Museum. The excavations uncovered at least two

rooms (only part of a much more extensive occupation of the area) with rich LMIA floor deposits, which were disturbed. The earlier remains however, from MMIIIB, were in lower levels and not affected. From that phase, three rooms were identified, the west one in better condition than the others (see fig. 5.34), while two more rooms are restored on a floor above the South and West rooms. The filling of the room included a destruction deposit and material fallen from the floor above, as well as a floor deposit distributed around the edges of the room (Deposit C). The catalogue recording all nearly complete vessels has been excluded here, since decorated sherds were selected in this case. The surface treatments can be seen in Table 5.25 and Charts 5.29 and 5.30, which show that 26% of the vessels are decorated and 6% of the total are more elaborate, in this case with Dark-on-Light ripple, which I have extensively discussed in association with the representative sample (see figs. 5.35 and 5.36).

Kommos

MMIII is considered an undivided period at this site, and the chronological conventions followed are slightly unorthodox and require care in the synchronisations with the rest of the island. Local MM III is the first phase in which there are unambiguous destruction levels with whole vases found in them, probably caused by earthquake (Betancourt 1990: 37-41). This period is identical to Phaistos III, and the closest parallel from Knossos is the Temple Repositories.

Among the contexts excavated from this period is a storeroom in the Central Hillside, Room 25, a floor deposit including 67 whole or restorable vessels, 6 of them pithoi, placed on a slab-paved floor (Betancourt 1990: 101-112). This provides an outstandingly complete deposit for Kommos, with the exception of a small part disturbed by a LMIII pit, which has been excluded from the presentation and the analysis. There is a wide variety of shapes, suggesting generalised storage, and perhaps the storage of pottery itself: there are, for example, large numbers of conical and straight-sided cups (see Table 5.26). Due to the high level of completeness of the vessels, the floor deposit is separately catalogued, permitting a reliable assessment of surface treatments among those (see Table 5.27 and Charts 5.31 and 5.32). According to this, 46.3% of the pottery is decorated and an impressive 9% of all pottery has more elaborate decoration, including three examples with complex representational and

polychrome decoration, one of the highest categories of labour investment in the classification. This is found on pouring shapes, such as ewers (see fig. 5.37). This is not the only outstanding feature of this assemblage, which also includes five rhyta belonging to four different shape categories (see fig. 5.38). The floor deposit allows us to have an overview of the character of the assemblage, which is mixed in terms of types and functions represented, confirming Betancourt's hypothesis that the space was used for general storage (which contributes the majority of the decoration, in simple ways such as trickle, found on container vessels) as well as the storage of non-container vessels used in other occasions (a collection for pouring and consumption of liquids). In terms of composition and storage practices, this parallels certain spaces at Malia. In order, however, to see the practices in a more dynamic way, in combination with changes through time, it is also useful to compare with contemporary Knossos, and the changes that can be suggested at that site from MM IIB to MM III, and note that the increase in decoration in MM III seems to apply to both sites.

Palaikastro

The site of Palaikastro was first excavated in the early 20th century by the British School at Athens, and excavations were resumed in 1962-3 (see fig. 5.39). The site was surveyed in 1983 and excavations resumed from 1986, with some results and reports published periodically in the *ABSA*, the source of some data presented here, in conjunction with separate publications of Block M and the wells from the site (MacGillivray *et al*. 1987).

Building 2 has been interpreted on the basis of its architectural elaboration, location and contents as a mansion, one of the richest houses at the site. Large quantities of pottery were found in Room 2, interpreted as a kitchen and pantry, and in the corridor linking Room 2 and Room 5 (a lightwell), the result of the destruction of a cupboard (MacGillivray *et al*. 1987). The deposit in room 2 consists mostly of conical cups fallen from the cupboard, in addition to which the room includes some pottery placed on the floor and a clay-lined pit. Its date has been debated, with MMIIIB suggested on the basis of stylistic characteristics (Bernini 1995), although later re-examination dates it to LMIA and the Thera eruption horizon (Knappett and Cunningham 2003). The composition of the deposit, based on the catalogue of the complete and restorable vessels, can be seen in Table 5.28 and its surface treatments

in Table 5.29 and Charts 5.33 and 5.34. Only 11% of the pottery is decorated, a number which is undoubtedly related to the large number of conical cups, which are moreover notable for their standardised dimensions. There is no truly elaborate decoration, and the highest degree of investment can be seen in the limited representational motifs, especially associated with hemispherical cups (see fig. 5.40). This pattern creates a connection with those already seen in earlier sites in the Protopalatial period, showing the potential of the opposition of different practices of surface treatment and decoration to create distinction. In this case, the lack of decorative complexity can make the distinction less significant, at the same time as the volume and standardization of the plain material strengthens it.

Area 6, located west of Building 5, was occupied until LMIA. Part of the North West Building was located there containing a large destruction deposit restricted in a narrow compartment (known as Trench EP 87 in the original, 2003, publication of the deposit and Context 45.4 in the publication of Block M) and dating to MMIIIB-LMIA (MacGillivray *et al.* 1991; Knappett and Cunningham 2003; 2012: 184). The material is mixed together and very closely packed, with the smaller pots placed into larger ones, and many vessels surviving whole near the top. It is probably a secondary deposit, with material brought in after cleaning of another area, a former storage space used for dumping. Its contents can be seen in Table 5.30 and surface treatments in Table 5.31 and Charts 5.35 and 5.36. The deposit is very similar in character and composition to the one in Building 6, Room R1, suggesting that it was the contents of a similar space that were all transported and dumped together, differing in the slightly worse preservation due to the discard process and the number of storage jars present. Since the vast majority of the functions represented have to do with the preparation of food and drink, it has been suggested that these are the, only slightly disturbed, contents of a pottery cupboard, meant to be used in gatherings taking place in the adjacent courtyard. About 32% of the pottery has some form of decoration and only 3% is more elaborate. Before discussing those figures further, it is also useful to look at the related spaces R1 and R3 (see fig. 5.41).

Building 6 (see fig. 5.42) is very interesting, with an architectural structure that differs from the usual pattern in Palaikastro of isolated buildings or town blocks, and a paved entrance leading to a central court surrounded by colonnades as well as

the use of different coloured stones for architectural details (MacGillivray *et al.* 1992; MacGillivray *et al.* 1998). In this building, a destruction deposit was found in room R (Knappett and Cunningham 2003; 2012: 169). R1, Context 10a.2, is a small closet, likely close to an entrance to the east of the building. The vessels were closely packed, some of them still stacked inside each other, as they collapsed along with building debris during an earthquake. They are also grouped by type, showing that it was an organized storage space before destruction. Around 200 vessels belong to this deposit (see Tables 5.32 and 5.33 and Charts 5.37 and 5.38), most of them complete or nearly complete. More than three quarters are small open shapes. There are far fewer pouring vessels and some more fragmentary cooking ones. In terms of the number and elaboration of polychrome vessels, it is very close to Context 45.4, to which it is also paralleled in terms of function: 29% of the pottery is decorated and 3.6% has more elaborate decoration (represented by ripple and polychromy, see figs. 5.43 and 5.44). Also related is Context 11a.2, at nearby space R3, and intended for hospitality provision at a neighbouring court (Knappett and Cunningham 2012: 169-178). In this case the proportion of cups is even higher, lowering the percentage of decoration further, to nearly one third of R1 (11.3%). The quantity of elaborate decoration is correspondingly lower, under 1%. This difference has to do with the difference in overall decoration, since the part of all decoration that is elaborate is closer to the related deposits (6%, compared to 10% for 45.4 and 12% for R1).

LMI

Samples from the Stratigraphic Museum

Due to a series of doubts concerning the chronology of some deposits, LM I was broken up into as many distinct segments as possible. These were not lumped together because some of them, such as LM IA, were clearly defined and there was no justification for amalgamating them with other, less distinct, samples. Others faced specific problems of their own, such as the issue of understanding LM IB through the Stratigraphic Museum samples, discussed in a later section, and others yet had a distinctive character, in terms of function and composition, that needed to be addressed separately. In this section, I will first present the samples dating to LM IA, followed by the published deposits belonging to that period, and then those assigned to LM IB.

The characteristics of LM IA set it apart both from the preceding and the subsequent phases. The sample which will be presented here comes from the combination of representative zembils from the SEX excavations. Conical cups are now more frequent, but not overwhelming and they have little impact on the ratio of different surface treatments to one another, apart from the number of smoothed/slipped surfaces. The impression of greater variability and the absence of a completely dominant surface treatment in all shapes continues from late MM III and is even reinforced (see Table 5.34 and Charts 5.39-41). Smoothed surfaces become even more frequent, now slightly surpassing monochrome ones. Several decorative treatments have a substantial presence, specifically banded, simple geometric monochrome (mostly spirals) and representational decoration (see fig. 5.45). Among decorated pottery, for the first time so far, simple geometric decoration is the most common category (39.5%), and banded falls to second place (31%). The third most common category is representational pottery, almost exclusively consisting of reed decoration (20.8%). Both the overcoming of simple banded decoration by simple geometric decoration and the frequency of representation are indications of an increase, not just in the overall presence of decoration (which is up to 28.6%), but also in its elaboration and complexity. Complex decoration is still present, but less than in the previous phase, and in LM IA it mostly consists of a combination of ripple, which is still in use, and the more elaborate and carefully executed spirals. The overall structure of late MM III and LM IA share similarities, with three main groups making up the majority of the decorated pottery, and the rest of the treatments being present in smaller numbers. The main differences are that representational decoration has taken the place of complex (ripple) and the absence of polychromy.

Published deposits

Knossos

Going back to the Acropolis Houses, in LMI a house was built, partly over the MMIII one. As mentioned above, most of the LMIA (or LMIB, according to Van de Moortel 1998) deposits were heavily disturbed, but a floor deposit in good condition was found *in situ* in Room 1 (see fig. 5.46). Some new breaks show that it was not completely untouched by the ploughing, but all contents were present. Apart from the pottery (Deposit F), the room also contained loomweights and a small bronze rod. The

treatments of the 27 vessels belonging to the floor deposit can be seen in Table 5.35 and Charts 5.42 and 5.43. A much larger overall percentage is decorated (41%), but the percentage of elaborate decoration shows a more limited increase, going up to 7%, although it includes some examples of great investment (see figs. 5.47, 5.48 and 5.49). The finds from these houses are particularly relevant to the question of what happens to the quality and quantity of pottery decoration as the Neopalatial progresses, and they need therefore to be seen in conjunction with the bigger picture on the site, provided by the deposits studied from the Stratigraphic Museum, at the same time as they interrogate that data as an independent source. The activity context is also potentially significant. Hatzaki (2011: 253-254) suggests that the space in which Deposit F was found was used for the consumption of food and drink, although the number of people involved and the association with specific activities, such as the sealing of a lustral basin, is uncertain. It shows however, beyond doubt, that activities associated with the palace in traditional scholarship, such as group consumption of food and drink, were not actually limited to it. Starting from that similarity, it is possible to compare the scale of those different events, and its implications: the consumption suggested by a total of 27 vessels cannot be called 'feasting', so any similarities would lie instead in the shared associations of consumption and its investment with meaning in the course of recurrent activities, integrated into daily life and using focus-pulling decorated equipment.

Kommos

The next period, the transitional MMIII/LMIA phase, is very complicated at Kommos. Another earthquake occurred in this phase and the Hillside area was not rebuilt until later in LMIA (Watrous 1992:1-3). It is unclear when exactly repairs were carried out, whether there was a limited occupation after the earthquake and if deposits in the area are primary or secondary. The Hillside, however, is not the full extent of the site: the southern area is occupied by the 'Civic Centre', a succession of court-centred buildings from MMIIB onwards. In the Neopalatial period, from MM IIIA, Building T is the main building in the area, with four wings arranged around a central court (Rutter 2004:63-65; Shaw et al. 2001:1-3; 25-27). In the southern stoa of this building, an early LMIA (contemporary with MM IIIB at other sites, due to the differences in synchronisation mentioned above) pottery kiln has been discovered and excavated (see fig. 5.50). Large quantities of pottery were found around the kiln,

along with wasters from the operation of the kiln. Inside the collapsed kiln itself, part of the last load that was fired was found, offering the unique opportunity to study pottery in the context and moment of its production. One of the first characteristics that need to be noted is the consistency of the pottery produced here: the fabric is uniform, the decoration is always Light-on-Dark (challenging assumptions that this way of decoration is a characteristic of the Protopalatial period only, assuming that these labels are applicable in this period, especially cross-regionally, given the synchronisation problems of Kommos) and the shapes belong to the usual household range, excluding those that are used with fire and therefore need to be made out of a different fabric.

The quantities of each shape can be seen in Table 5.36. These are only rough estimates for the minimum number of vessels in the kiln and the dump, extracted from mostly descriptive information and should be treated as such, but the general impression they offer ought to be representative. The shapes that are not considered a product of the kiln have been excluded. The surface treatments of those vessels are summarised in Table 5.37 and Chart 5.44. Simple geometric decoration generally refers to spirals (see fig. 5.51), and the only indication of slightly higher elaboration is the reed decoration seen on fine kalathoi (see fig. 5.52) (Shaw *et al.* 2001: 66-73). Also in the representational decoration category belong plant motifs on about a quarter of oval-mouthed amphorae (see fig. 5.53), but there are too simply executed to count towards elaborate decoration, suggesting that the most realistic estimate for the presence of elaboration among the kiln's products is probably zero. A last category of vessels that was found in the dump but not produced in the kiln (and therefore not counted) was named 'Dark-on-Light Patterned' (see fig. 5.54) and it consists of 20 vessels, 15 of them definitely imports from other, undetermined, areas of Crete. These show that, although more complex pottery is present at the site, it was not produced in this context. Aside from production, and its situation in a central building, there are two further directions these numbers take us when compared with the earlier MM III deposits from the same site, as well as contemporary the deposits at Knossos, seen in the context of broader production trends and concerns and assumptions on the quality of pottery in this phase.

These findings can be discussed in the context of the changes that take place in MMIIIB- LMIA in general, discussed in Chapter 4, and serve to illustrate them in practice. There are indications on the pots that they were produced quickly, such as compression ridges, stretch marks and heavy wheel ridges, all the result of uneven pressures and a quick lifting of the vessel from the wheel. The same installation was used for the production of a variety of shapes, at proportions which correspond more or less to those found in domestic contexts, with the exception of pottery in more specialised fabrics. Some shapes, such as the oval-mouthed amphoras and kalathoi, are produced in larger numbers perhaps to compensate for breakages caused by frequent use or as objects for trade. Overall, the production of the kiln seems pretty standardised: the fabrics fall into consistent ranges and their association with the surface treatment is also consistent, as are the motifs themselves. It is not certain whether this is the output of one potter or workshop, or whether the kiln was used by more who were working in the same way, but it seems to be a single tradition (Shaw *et al*., 2001: 102-107). In addition to the evidence for hurried production, we also saw lower investment in finishing and decoration and the morphological variability of shapes also decreases. In conclusion, we have evidence of the way a significant proportion of the ceramic vessels required for use on the site were manufactured, and we can see the elements of speedier and more standardised production, but at the same time this is not representative of the full range of pottery present and used at the site, and accounts for only a specific aspect of it, as indicated even by the presence of more elaborate vessels not produced at the kiln in its surroundings.

Samples from the Stratigraphic Museum: The problem of LM IB in Knossos

The specifically LM IB phase of LM I at Knossos has been delegated to a distinct section, since it requires a different approach due to the limited quantity of available data. This is a long-standing and recognized problem in Knossos, which suffers especially from the lack of destruction deposits, of fully published excavations, as well as the dating problems caused by the emphasis given in the past to the most elaborate examples, such as the Dark-on-Light Lustrous Marine Style (Hatzaki 2007a: 155; MacDonald 2011: 452). Here, I will try to approach the characteristics of deposits in this period based on a combination of the available material, comparative data from Myrtos Pyrgos and published information from Knossos and other sites.

Access was not possible to samples from Peter Warren's RRS or SEX excavations dating to this period, although the phase exists, since the material mostly consists of complete or restorable pots, and not sherds. One deposit from the Royal Road North was recently partially published (Hood 2011: 153-172), coming from a large building and a group of basement rooms. No quantification was offered, but it was remarked that much of the pottery was decorated, and there was a lot of variability, with little evidence for the very finest of the period (Hood 2011: 157; 170-172). From SEX, pottery deposits were found in the Room of the Children's Bones in the North House, collapsed from an upper floor (Wall *et al.* 1986), and elsewhere in the North House. Destruction deposits were also found at a kiln construction south of the East-West Road (Warren 1981), as well as other areas which have not been published yet (Warren 2011: 183-195). A floor deposit in the Cult Room Basement consists mostly of conical cups, with few examples of decoration. The deposit in the Room of the Children's Bones is quite similar to this (Warren 1981). Briefly put, there seem to be two kinds of deposits found in the destruction levels of the Stratigraphic Museum Extension: those that have higher percentages of fine vessels and decoration, usually fallen from upper floors, and those that are dominated by conical cups, which are simpler. This observation I want to set aside for future discussion, as I turn to the directly available evidence. Finally, it should be mentioned that in other parts of Knossos, where only selected pottery is available, indications show that there as well the level of elaboration is very high (Mountjoy 2003: 78).

The LM I house on the Acropolis has specifically been compared in terms of contents to the North House (Hatzaki 2011: 254-255). Two crucial differences were the lack of the most elaborate Dark-on-Light Lustrous pottery in Deposit F, and the evidence for storage in F, which is lacking in the North House. Despite these differences, the comparison brings us back to the original suggestion, made based on the published deposit, that the activities taking place in elite spaces close to the palace and elsewhere on the site might be similar, but in different scales, in this case expressed in the scarcity of the most complex pottery in the Acropolis House. Additionally, the presence of storage vessels there indicates the presence of a regular domestic assemblage serving the full functions of the household, in which context social occasions can take place, while their lack in the North House is one more hint

towards the potential for more specialised use of space, reflecting in and reinforced by the material equipment in it.

I had the opportunity to examine some LM IB assemblages from the SWH, which have not been published yet. Most of the material has been destroyed by subsequent construction, but some burnt fills characterise the end of the LM IB period, with only a small mixture of LM II (see fig. 5.55). These are all secondary deposits, resulting from the levelling of destruction debris for rebuilding (MacDonald 2011: 453-456). Sherds from context SV.II.4 in the SWH come from two sources: the fill and a separate collection of catalogued pots. These two were combined to gain a more balanced impression. Even combined, the sample size is very small, consisting of 193 sherds, little more than a quarter of which are conical cups (see Table 5.38 and Charts 5.45-46). In terms of the overall appearance of the sample, smoothed-slipped surfaces are by far the most common (c.47%), but many decorative treatments play an important part, especially representational which is found on almost 17% of all sherds.

The percentage of decoration is quite high (39.4% for the combination of the fill and the catalogued pots) and the ratios of the different treatments are quite close, with the main differences being that representational decoration is far more common in the catalogued samples (as would be expected) and banded decoration is more common in the fill, while the rest of the treatments are quite close together. The fill composition is comparable to LM II, with the exception of the strong presence of trickle-splatter decoration (see fig. 5.56). Even in combination, however, the rate of decoration and the frequency of representational motifs is strikingly high. However, we have seen that decoration is even more common in the fill, so we cannot attribute that higher rate to selection of the catalogued pots. I would be very cautious about using this sample as a reference for the whole period, which was the reason it was initially excluded, but it can be used, in combination with the rest of the data offered here, to give an alternative view of the period to the conical-cup dominated assemblages that will concern us later.

Material from Pyrgos, Period IV, was studied with the permission of Gerald Cadogan. All the pottery presented here came from the Country House, the main building of the site, which stands out through the use of stones of different colours to

demarcate areas, ashlar masonry and location. The house burnt down in LM IB, providing good preservation in some cases, as well as secure dating (Cadogan 1978). The pottery was divided by room, and it would be very interesting if it were possible to relate those assemblages to the interpretations of room function, but in this case, due to sample size, it was considered preferable to study them all together and see how they compare to the data from Knossos. The sample also includes the pottery found on the street outside, which had fallen from the building itself. The data can be seen in greater detail in Table 5.39 and Charts 5.47-5.48. For Pyrgos, only vessels that were complete, or sherds that could be identified as part of a distinct vessel, were taken into account, in order to avoid double counting vessels and because the bags of smaller sherds were selected for decoration. The proportion of decorated pottery (36.4%) is quite similar to that seen in the SWH, and the main differences are the greater frequency of banded and complex decoration, and the lower frequency of trickle-splatter and representation. The Country House is one of the few contexts I examined, alongside the SWH, where Marine Style pottery was found. Its presence here, in a room interpreted as a shrine, as well as in the North House in SEX and contexts elsewhere in Crete, led Mountjoy (1985) to suggest that vessels decorated with Marine motifs might have ritual associations.

In other sites as well, the strong presence of simple representational motifs seems to be a general rule in LM IB (Chatzi-Vallianou 2011: 350-370; Mandalaki 2011:390-1). In Mochlos, from the beginning of LM IB and becoming stronger later in the period, there is a tendency for schematisation of designs, often of representational origin. It was also observed that there are more finely decorated drinking cups in the wealthier houses of the island, and that there is also variability between houses in terms of their ceramic contents (Barnard and Brogan 2011: 436-447). To summarize, based on this information it is possible to infer cautiously that, overall, a high level of decoration, some of it elaborate and a lot of it using representational motifs, continues in LM IB in Knossos, as in many other sites on the island. In this period some of the most elaborate examples are extremely impressive, but also rare, as we can see by their extreme scarcity in these deposits. By way of illustration, there only a single Marine Style sherd was found in an unselected deposit, from the fill and catalogued deposits from the SWH. The other side of this picture

comes from a different kind of deposit that can be seen in (and around) this period, which is the subject of the following section.

Samples from the Stratigraphic Museum: LM I and conical cups: a study of relationships and effects

This section concerns the analysis of two large deposits from the SWH whose composition sets them apart from both the LM IA and the LM IB samples used so far. It seemed likely that this difference was not one of dating, but because those two deposits were assemblages of a different character. For this reason, they were extracted from the chronological sequence. One is composed of a combination of generically LMI deposits from the South-West Houses. It is also connected to three further questions: Firstly, the relation of this deposit to a large and doubtfully dated deposit (LMIB-II) from a different area of the SWH which will be re-introduced in this discussion later (both share elements such as an overwhelming presence of conical cups). Secondly, the part conical cups play in the deposit, and what kind of deposits consist predominantly of them. Thirdly, the relationship between fine decorated pottery and semi-coarse decorated pottery, which will be the subject of a separate section.

Starting off with the overall composition of the LM I and LM IB-II deposits and its differences from the clear LM IA and LM IB examples, we are immediately confronted with the question of the presence of conical cups and their impact. Their presence in the LM I deposit is much stronger: 61.6% of all sherds come from conical cups. The assemblage was analysed both with and without those, and the results were very interesting. The question was whether the conical cups are simply added "on top of" the assemblage and change the proportions just from the fact of their presence, or whether those that are dominated by conical cups are otherwise different sorts of assemblages[7]. Conical cups, being usually smoothed, with a smaller monochrome component, affect usually the ratios of surface treatments in the sample, but not the internal proportions of decoration, so any differences in those cannot be attributed just to the presence of the conical cups, but to a different nature of the deposit.

[7] There are also practical questions, such as whether the more elaborate decorated pottery was separately stored, a possibility that needed to be addressed, but the study of the other deposits from the SW Houses has not indicated the existence of further sherds from the studied deposits.

In general terms, there is much less variability in the LM I deposit (see Table 5.40 and Charts 5.49-52). In the complete sample, a smoothed surface is by far the most common (67.9%), followed more distantly by monochrome (24.4%), while any decorative treatment has a much smaller impact. In the sample excluding the conical cups, the impact of banded and simple geometric decoration is felt much more strongly (both are 9.1% of the sample excluding conical cups), and the frequency of smoothed (26%) and monochrome surfaces is reversed, with monochrome being the most common (54.1%). As I mentioned before, since conical cups are almost never decorated, their presence or absence does not directly affect the internal distribution of decoration, but just the overall proportions, by raising the number of undecorated sherds in the deposit, and any difference in the ratios of decorative treatments is probably because the deposit is of a different kind. In this case the difference is clear, if compared with the ratios in LM IA. Even if we set aside the lower overall percentage of decoration (7.4% counting the conical cups, 19.4% without them, which is still low, compared to the rates of decoration established previously for MM III and LM IA), there is also the great reduction in the variability and complexity of decoration in the deposit. Simple geometric decoration and bands dominated it, both at 47% of decorated sherds, acounting for 94% of the total (see fig. 5.57). There is no relief-incised or polychrome decoration, and the representational component, which was so prominent in the LM IA deposits, is reduced to 2.5% of the decorated, while only 1.5% of sherds have complex decoration (see fig. 5.58).

The LM IB-II group from the SWH is from SV.II.4 (see Table 5.41 and Chart 5.53) and is another instance of a very large deposit dominated by conical cups (more than half of all sherds), so in that sense it is comparable with the LM I sample. As would be expected, smoothed-slipped surfaces are the most frequent (73.9 %), followed distantly by monochrome (20.8 %) pottery. It follows that decoration is rather rare, seen on c. 5% of sherds. Around half of these are decorated with bands and around a quarter have simple monochrome decoration. It is interesting to note that, as in the LM IB deposit from the SWH, which was examined in the previous section, trickle-splatter decoration (see fig. 5.59) has a strong presence (c. 10%) and representational and complex decoration are both present, with representational (8.5%) being more than twice as common as complex (3.8%). This deposit was also studied without the conical cups, giving a higher decoration percentage (11.8%). This

deposit might be slightly more complex and closer to the tendencies of LM IB, but it is not the same as the fill and catalogued SV.II.4 deposit, showing perhaps a less pronounced direction of the same trend. It is useful to keep in mind that so far the data on deposits where the majority of the sherds come from conical cups are limited to those two, but it is possible to support it with other observations, such as Warren's (1981) in the preliminary SEX publication, and make an initial suggestion that very large groups of conical cups make up, and are found in, intrinsically different deposits.[8]

Published deposits

Palaikastro

Palaikastro was destroyed in LMIB and at least partially re-occupied later. As a result of this destruction, House N produced a large pottery deposit, some of the most elaborate vessels in which demonstrate the presence of the highest level of decorative complexity, which has been scarce so far (Sackett and Popham 1970). These include a marine style stirrup jar, a Knossian import (identified on the basis of decoration and typological criteria) depicting an octopus (see fig. 5.60), as well as other imports from Knossos (see fig. 5.61) and local decorated pottery, such as a rhyton with applied and painted representational motifs, found in Room 7, the same as the stirrup jar. Two large pottery stores are mentioned in Rooms 17 and 18 in Building N, and the contents of Room 18 are presented in Table 5.42. The surface treatments have been calculated from illustrations, and those not mentioned have been assigned “plain”. Since it is not explicitly stated that the decorated vessels were selected for illustration, it cannot be assumed that the simpler ones are fully represented, and therefore the final quantity should be considered a severe underestimate. For the whole of the Building, out of 665 pots mentioned (150 listed in the index), 32 are decorated (4.8%) and the majority (at least 440) are small open shapes, ogival and conical cups. This partly explains the low numbers of decoration, but another factor is that no full catalogue is included, so the common, simpler decoration is often not described and the percentage should again be considered a minimum. It is interesting, however,

[8] This kind of deposit has only been encountered so far in LM I, but it is not possible to rule out that the phenomenon exists in other phases as well, with different shapes playing the same role conical cups do here. Still, none of the deposits examined so far strongly suggested the same impression.

despite the sparse information, that more than half of the decorated vessels (17) are concentrated into two rooms, Room 9 and Room 10, which also were the locations of the most elaborately decorated ones, described above, and that they all seem to be medium-sized vessels associated with pouring and presentation, so it is not unlikely that were connected to a specific activity, a different aspect of which is represented by the large volume of undecorated cups. On the other hand, the missing component of the decoration that was not listed would probably cover the simple decoration distributed in space, on vessels such as storage jars and small open vessels in everyday use.

One final interesting feature, excavated in Palaikastro in 1994 and published in full, were two wells, 576 and 605 (see fig. 5.42). They were in Area 6, which was not otherwise occupied in the period, and used as a water source during LMIB. Complete stratigraphical sequences were recovered from their interiors without any disturbance (Sackett 2007: 1-7). Well 576 is oval-shaped, measures 2.05x1.60 m and its walls are lined with stone. As would have been expected from the use of the well, the deposit consists mostly of liquid transportation vessels (in terms of weight, out of 88.5 kg of pottery, only 4 kg belong to vessels with other functions), most of which were whole until blocks and slabs were thrown into the well. Fortunately, the well was not used to discard other domestic or clearance debris, leaving an homogeneous LMIB assemblage of vessels that have a direct functional connection to it. Most of these pots are made out of fine fabrics, since these are lighter, and therefore easier to immerse into the water and draw up to the surface, identified as local. Two older jugs were interpreted as heirlooms. The catalogue (Hatzaki 2007: 15-32) includes all the mostly complete vessels, and it is analysed in Tables 5.43 and 5.44 and Charts 5.54 and 5.55. A large percentage of vessels (40%) are decorated and one of them (1.3%) can be considered more elaborate, having representational decoration (see fig. 5.62), but the majority are much simpler (see fig. 5.63). The knobbed amphorae are a new shape typical of Palaikastro with protrusions on their body, often in combination with dripping (see fig. 5.64) (Hatzaki, 2007:78-82). This is a very interesting deposit because it isolates a specific, everyday, activity and the shapes associated with it and shows how prevalent the presence of simple decoration was in everyday life, not only in storage contexts and domestic spaces, but also in the part of the domestic equipment which is used elsewhere on the site. Well 605 is circular, with a diameter

of 1.20m, and is also lined with slabs. It cuts through MMIII and LMIA levels (MacGillivray 2007: 95-108). Not only has it a smaller capacity, but the composition of its contents is very different, without the clear predominance of vessels for liquid transport and including a large number of cups: 38 out of 72 catalogued examples (52.8%). The percentage of decorated pottery is also much smaller, although the kinds of decoration remain the same (26.4%). This could suggest that other deposits could have also been dumped into the well, or that other activities apart from the drawing of water could have taken place nearby.

Pseira

Pseira is a town on a small island just off the north coast of Crete, and a site where there is unambiguously no palace present. It has been excavated in its entirety, originally by Richard Seager in 1907. From the 1970s it was re-investigated and old areas re-excavated and published. One of the areas that were revisited is Building AC (see fig. 5.65), where new deposits that were missed in the previous excavations were found (Banou 1995: 13-25). AC10 is one of those, an open space at whose corner a rectangular area defined by vertical stone slabs was found. This was called the "Kasella" and the pottery from this and the rest of the space was distinguished (see Tables 5.45-48). The catalogue is not representative as a source of decoration percentages, but on the whole, the relative frequencies of decoration (see Charts 5.56 and 5.57) conform well to the profile of the period, with perhaps a relative emphasis on representational decoration (see fig. 5.66). There are also other indications of an increased investment in decoration, seen in objects such as a scoop with relief decoration, a painted foliate band and added red and white. This space forms a unit with Room AC1, which was the largest in the building and had wall paintings in plaster relief. The high percentage of fine cups in the "Kasella" is among the normal range for Pseira (Betancourt 1995: 121-128), but the unusual plan of the building, the presence of relief plaster on the walls and the stone-lined Kasella itself indicate that the space was as a whole out of the ordinary. A tentative association with religious activities has been suggested, so perhaps we can draw here a tentative parallel with some deposits in the North Building in the SEX excavations, differing, however, in the absence of the other typical LM IB deposit in Knossos, the one overwhelmed by conical cups.

The Plateia building (see fig. 5.67) is one of those areas of the site that were recently excavated, and the pottery was published in 1998 (Floyd 1998). On the basis of the architecture, location and size (it is the largest building at Pseira) it is considered a building of elite rank, but there are few contents that can be associated with it, since it was cleaned before destruction. Most of the pottery is completely fragmented. It is still primary refuse, however, leftovers from the actual use of the building, even though they do not give the complete picture. As a result, it is difficult to work out accurate percentages of decoration and relate them to vessels, but it is still useful to see roughly what functions took place in the building and what kinds of pottery they were associated with. There are only a few isolated levels from LMIA, and the majority of the contexts date to LMIB.

Contexts 5 and 6 from Room BS 1 are the combined floor fill and the collapse of the upper floor, which couldn't be distinguished. About 53% of the assemblage by sherd count are fine fabrics, and 75% of these belong to cups of various types, most of which are painted (Floyd 1998: 33-34; 181-182). This assemblage, therefore, has a clear character associated with consumption. The absolute minimum of decorated pottery is 16.7%, calculated on the basis of the statistical tables, while the catalogue, which has been selected for decoration, gives an intriguing picture of the internal composition of the decorated category (see Tables 5.49 and 5.50 and Chart 5.58): an impressive proportion is made up of simple geometric decoration. Representational decoration is also higher than usual (see fig. 5.68), while bands, usually the most common treatment, are uncommonly rare. The question of whether this has to do with the assemblage, or with the way decorated pottery is used in Pseira, or whether it is an artefact created by selection, has to wait for the study of further deposits. Not only is this collection associated with consumption, but it also contains groups of hemispherical cups decorated with spirals and interpreted as a set, perhaps associated with the specific household, as the publication suggests. Sherds in coarse fabrics come mostly from closed vessels such as jugs and jars. A large number of sherds from cooking vessels and the non-ceramic finds indicate that the area was used for food processing and, given the high percentage of cups, perhaps the vessels for serving were kept in the same location. The overall profile is not that different from what we saw in space AC 10, including the presence of elaborate scoops in both deposits, so perhaps we are starting to see some hints of a repeated consumption practice in Pseira.

Building BT was excavated by Seager, but the surface in front of its façade was cleaned during the recent excavations, and pottery statistics were recorded for the most important deposit from it (Betancourt 1999a: 177-179, see Table 5.51). There are no whole vessels and only a few profiles. The upper part of the deposit was removed by Seager and it is fairly mixed, with the majority dating to LMI, but the sherds range from Early Minoan to Byzantine. The LM I material must have originated from a storage area because it contains many jars and closed vessels (69%), possibly a storeroom in the upper floor that collapsed outwards. About 17% of sherds are decorated (see fig. 5.69), counting only the main LM I deposit, a percentage which is reliable according to Betancourt, and is the only evidence of a large storeroom in the Plateia area (Betancourt 1999b: 100). Two features stand out in the analysis of that deposit on the basis of the statistical tables: firstly, usually decoration in storage spaces is higher, so again we either see a divergent local practice, or (more likely) a lack of documentation of decoration in the shapes and types associated with storage and the effect of estimating decoration based on sherds from medium-sized semi-coarse vessels, which was described in Chapter 3. Secondly, the statistical tables give a rough impression of the kinds of decoration. Trickle is quite common, as expected from the closed-vessel dominated deposit, but, more interestingly, it seems that the impression of the greater frequency of simple geometric decoration compared to banded decoration is sustained, if we assume that the designation 'lines' in the table refers to what I have called bands. We can, therefore, very tentatively, suggest that this greater use of geometric decoration is a practice associated with Pseira.

In Building BY (Floyd 1999: 208-211) two undisturbed floor levels were found in rooms BY2 and BY1 (see fig. 5.70). BY2 only contained a few sherds, but BY1 contained a large number of fine sherds (43%), most of which are very worn. At least 15.7% of sherds are decorated, including semiglobular cups with spirals, floral bands, and a conglomerate pattern (see fig. 5.71). Only 10 examples are catalogued, of which only 6 are potential candidates for decoration, so it is not possible to estimate the relative frequencies of the different categories of decoration, but there seem to be similarities across the site, and the available information gives every indication that these contexts as well conform to the same patterns. This house is interpreted as an obsidian workshop, and Floyd suggests that as the house of a craftsman, large quantities of decorated pottery would be an indication of high status,

which would not be available to them. However, one of the most striking features of the analysis in Pseira is how consistent the quantity of decoration is from context to context (the elaboration could not be measured for most of them, so differentiation expressed through that is currently not visible). Despite the fact that these are all minimum estimates and not fully accurate, the biases affecting them are the same, so even if the numbers are inaccurate, their agreement is not. Moreover, the quantity remains fairly steady not only across houses, but also across different functions (with the exception of storage), which are expressed in different ways through the assemblages, such as shape frequencies, fabric, or the presence of specialised shapes like scoops or rhyta.

Mochlos

The site of Mochlos, a small peninsula in Eastern Crete in Minoan times and now an island, is the location of a town which grew in size in the Neopalatial period. The contexts that will be analysed here are not from the town itself but from the buildings of the Artisans' Quarter (see fig. 5.72) on the opposite shore and a farmstead at Chalinomouri (see fig. 5.73). Both of these are very important sites since they were founded in LM IB, used continuously and then destroyed at the end of the Neopalatial period, giving us well-dated destruction deposits with no earlier or later intrusions. Both sites have been published in great detail, including a pottery catalogue covering all vessels over one-third to half preserved, from all the secure floor levels of interior spaces, which can be used to cross-reference information from the statistical tables. The material was also subject to statistical analysis using both sherd percentage and estimated minimum number of vessels as measures. The second criterion will be used here in the presentation of selected contexts, since it is considered more accurate (Rehak and Younger 1998; Barnard *et al.* 2003: 2; 113-114). It is problematic that, although the statistical analysis in the publication takes decoration into account, decoration is defined differently, and it includes monochrome slipped vessels. An effort has been made to exclude these based on the catalogue, but it should be noted that, in an inversion of the usual problem, the percentages offered for decoration should in some cases be considered maximum numbers. This issue becomes even more problematic in rooms apart from Room 2 in the Artisans' Quarter, since less pottery from them is included in the catalogue. We should be especially sceptical concerning the percentages of ogival cups, which are the shape most associated with a

monochrome slip. It is clear that the same bias applies to all publications of Mochlos, which means that they are directly comparable at least with each other.

Setting that aside, Room 2 in Building A of the Artisans' Quarter combined several functions and contained at least 385 vessels. Functions represented include storage of foodstuffs, vessels (cups and bowls especially) and manufactured objects (bronze objects, which were manufactured in the building), as well as food preparation and consumption (Soles *et al.* 2003a: 24). The detailed breakdown of the decorated vessels by shape can be seen in Table 5.52 (Barnard *et al*. 2003: 117-118). In Room 2, 25.73% of the pottery is decorated, according to the statistical table, and 29.7% according to the catalogue (see Table 5.53 and Chart 5.59), confirming the table percentage, despite the problems discussed above. Around 4% of the decoration is complex, including a cup depicting three boats in a frieze, and there are also multiple examples of floral decoration, as well as more complex non-representational arrangements (see figs. 5.74-5.75). One of the closed vessels, perhaps from a stirrup jar, preserves parts of tentacles, showing that it originally carried marine style decoration.

Room 4 is the largest room in Building A, with a wooden column situated at its centre, and was one of the main work areas, used for stone vase making, bronze working and perhaps some textile production (Soles *et al.* 2003a: 13). The chamber includes two platforms, a storage bin and a refuse pit to assist in these activities. The users of the room might also have consumed food and drink in it, as indicated by the pottery assemblage. The decorated pottery from it is analysed in Table 5.54 (Barnard *et al.* 2003:121-122). Based on the statistical tables, 23.24% of the minimum number of vessels is calculated as decorated, a percentage which seems close to what would result from decorated pottery as defined in this project, and close enough to that calculated for Room 2. Only 10 vessels in total are catalogued, so it would not be accurate to estimate the correspondence with the table or the rate of more complex decoration, but we know that at least one beak-spouted jug is decorated with a frieze of grass or reed motif (see fig. 5.76). The two other vessels described in the catalogue have simpler banded decoration.

The manufacture of pottery was one of the main activities of the inhabitants of Building B in the Artisans' Quarter, and finds include potters' wheels, areas for the

preparation of clay and kilns outside the house. Room 10 is considered mostly, but not exclusively, a working space. Stone benches are situated against the west and south walls, it has a central column and the floor is partly paved (Soles *et al*. 2003a: 56-57). A fragmentary potter's wheel was found here, as well as a stone pivot and work slabs. The decorated pottery from the room is analysed in Table 5.55 (Barnard *et al.* 2003: 154-155) and once again not enough pottery is catalogued for estimates, so it is difficult to know if the percentage of 34% decorated corresponds to our criteria. There is evidence for more complex decoration in the form of a tall alabastron with a crocus motif and one more floral example (see fig. 5.77). A squat alabastron, decorated with rosettes, is probably a LHIIA mainland import, which is interesting because it means that the occupants and users of Building B were not limited to their own productions, but had access to and desire for imported products, and perhaps the substances they contained (since an alabastron is a small closed shape). It is very unlikely, in any case, that a workshop would provide the full range of vessels needed, or even if the inhabitants would cover their ceramic needs on the side, regardless of what the 'commercial' product was. These aspects of acquisition and consumption would depend on the degree of specialised focus of production.

Room 9 is a general domestic space in the same building, and the decorated pottery from it can be seen in Table 5.56 and Chart 5.60 (Barnard *et al*. 2003: 152-153) and the surface treatments in Table 5.57. The amount of charcoal and the faunal remains indicate that it was used for food preparation (Soles *et al*. 2003a: 75), and the pottery types also include storage and consumption. As in room A2, the percentage of decoration from the catalogue (c. 30%) corresponds well with the statistical table (c.28%). This happens in the Mochlos publications because, while monochrome is included in decoration (increasing the percentage) not all decorated vessels are placed in distinct categories identifying them in the statistical tables (decreasing the percentage), and, in the cases we have had the opportunity to examine a room's contents in detail, so far these two tendencies more or less balance out. Roughly 4% of the catalogued pottery is complex, including, as in Room A2, a closed vessel, possibly from a stirrup jar, with a marine motif, probably an argonaut (see fig. 5.78). What we see, therefore, is that in the two different buildings of equivalent social position, the presence of decorated pottery in multifunctional domestic spaces is very

similar, and that these numbers are, not only reliable, but representing a level of use of decorated pottery that is consistent within social groups.

The building at the site of Chalinomouri is interpreted as a farmhouse. The precise status of its occupants and their relation with the main settlement are not entirely clear, but it is described as a "humble" residence for a group of people involved in farming, animal husbandry and limited craft activities. Room 6 is the house's entrance and its largest room, with a column supporting the roof near the centre of the room. The features in the room also include a stone platform and four benches (Soles *et al.* 2003b: 107-109). It was used for a variety of activities, including cooking and eating, and the pottery was very fragmentary. The decorated vessels can be seen in Table 5.58 and only 15 are catalogued (Barnard *et al*. 2003: 169-170). Given the vessel types, the percentage of 23.29% decorated is likely to be relatively accurate for the purposes of this work (also, having shown the balancing tendencies above, it is tempting to apply them across the board and accept the statistical tables' decoration estimates, in the absence of catalogue data). There is at least one complex example, a bridge-spouted or collared jug with pendent arcs and a scale pattern on the shoulder (see fig. 5.79).

Room 2 in Chalinomouri is predominantly a storage space, mostly for food, although some other items were found in it as well (Soles *et al.* 2003b: 112-114). Table 5.59 shows the decorated pottery for this space (Barnard *et al*. 2003: 163-164), which includes a high relative number of conical and ogival cups, perhaps in this case affecting the percentage of decorated pottery (27.07%) which is probably lower. At least one complex example is included among the eight catalogued vessels, an imported stirrup jar that has a frieze of pinwheels, alternating with floral motifs (see fig. 5.80). In the same room, a small deposit has been distinguished in the tables and catalogue, consisting of storage vessels buried in the floor. Although it only included 14 vessels, it has been analysed, because all of them are complete and included in the catalogue (see Tables 5.60 and 5.61 and Chart 5.61) and because it can help us isolate an assemblage with a single storage function and study its characteristics. Decoration is found on 28.6% of the vessels, and there are no complex examples. In this group we also see a decorative practice typical of Mochlos in a storage jar with an incised lily on its shoulder (see fig. 5.81). (Barnard *et al*. 2003: 101). Notably, the overall

degree of decoration corresponds well to the spaces with generalised functions in the building, but the lower investment in terms of complexity might be significant, although it is notable that it is not absent, and that the quantity of decoration is directly comparable to the Artisans' Quarter.

LM II

From this phase onwards, I have restricted the information to the samples studied from the Stratigraphic Museum, in order to give a continuing impression of developments and follow the site and the Palace for the rest of its Bronze Age development, but avoid an overwhelming volume of data and diversity of research questions. LM II then, the first of the Knossos-only phases, was studied as a single period. The sample consists of a combination of deposits from the SWH and a pit in the Minoan Unexplored Mansion (MUM)[9]. The ratios of surface treatments in the Representative Sample seem to continue LM I trends, more clearly seen in the best-dated LM IA, but also characterising LM IB (see Table 5.62 and Charts 5.62-64). LM II gives an overall impression of marked diversity. Monochrome surfaces are slightly more common that smoothed ones, perhaps related to the smaller quantities of conical cups. Simple geometric decoration is a very notable component, and banded and representational decoration stand out as well. Decoration is almost as common as in LM IA, found on 27.6% of all sherds. Simple geometric monochrome decoration is the first among these (51.7% of the decorated, 14.3% of the total), now by an even larger margin than in the LM IA, when the same sequence of preferences could be observed, and in this case, as in the previous one, this favouring of geometrics over banded decoration (21.2%; 5.8% of the total) can be considered an indication of greater overall elaboration (see fig. 5.82). Just slightly less common is representational decoration, which is almost as large a component as in LM IA, found on 16.8% of the decorated sherds (see fig. 5.83), and in LM II consists almost exclusively of stylized floral motifs, most of which seem to be inspired by garlands.

[9] Usually these aggregate samples are treated as a single unit, but it is useful to note here that the deposit from the SW Houses had a very high percentage of decorated pottery among the fine sherds, which shows that a low degree of decoration (as seen in the conical cup deposits) is not a diachronic characteristic of the SW Houses' deposits (due to post-excavation practices or the deposits themselves), but only limited to some phases, an observation which will become especially relevant in the discussion of the next section.

Complex decoration (combinations of zigzags, wavy lines and triangles, some of which have a woven look) comprises a significant part, making up 8.1% of the decorated pottery, making it more common than in LM IA. With the exception of relief-incised decoration, all other treatments are also present. To summarise, this period looks very similar to LM I, with a similar high percentage of decorated pottery and a great degree of elaboration, with the main difference being different frequencies in the distribution of decoration, not a three-way division, but with a dominant simple geometric, followed by bands and representational in similar numbers, and a slight increase in complex decoration.

For the same period, there is a great wealth of deposits from MUM, most of which are questionable in terms of selection. In these cases, it would be useful to know what were the criteria followed for selection, so that it can be assessed whether at least the ratios of the decorative treatments to one another are representative. However, the decorative treatments encountered and their ratios generally confirm the impression offered by the reference sample. It is also telling, and useful, that the deposits where the percentage of decoration is closer to the representative sample are also closer in the comparison of ratios of surface treatments, while those that have larger percentages of decorated pottery due to selection could also have been in some cases selected for complexity, since the more elaborate surface treatments are more frequent than in the reference samples.

LMIIIA

LM IIIA is represented by a single zembil from the SEX excavations, which might not be representative. Based on this data, it is not possible at present to have a finer and more detailed division of LM IIIA and examine how its parts relate to the preceding and following phases, although in all likelihood there are internal distinctions. Since this is only one zembil, the sample size is also much smaller, the smallest used at this stage of the research, which might be a factor that influences the result. In terms of the general frequency of surface treatments (see Table 5.63 and Charts 5.65-67), smoothed-slipped is the most common, followed by monochrome (suggesting that the overtaking of smoothed-slipped by monochrome in the LM II is not a general trend, but likely that the two vary deposit by deposit). Interestingly, for the first time, the third most significant category is burnished-polished (5.9%),

without doubt due to the increase of highly polished small open vessels, such as goblets and stemmed cups. The percentage of decoration is quite low (8.2%), but due to the single origin and the small sample size, it is very difficult to generalise this characteristic to the period. The ratios of different decorative treatments are interesting, because on the one hand there is no single, overwhelmingly common style, but on the other hand three decoration styles (trickle, relief-incised and simple polychrome) are completely absent. It is also interesting to note that despite the low percentage of decoration, its complexity remains quite high. Banded decoration is once again the most common style (46.4%, 3.8% of the total sherd count), followed by simple geometric (28.6%, 2.3%), representational (17.9%) and complex decoration (7.1%). We can note here that percentages of representational and complex decoration actually remain similar to LM II within the decorated category (and their look and motifs are similar as well), but they are rarer in the assemblage in general, a point that is also potentially meaningful.

The MUM provides yet more samples, accompanied by the set of uncertainties already identified. These are separated into IIIA1 and IIIA2 (unlike the original sample) offering also the opportunity to examine if the phase should be divided on the basis of the available data. A deposit from the North Corridor and one from the Pillar Hall make up the sample for LM IIIA1. They cannot show if the SEX sample is actually representative in terms of the quantity of decoration, since they are heavily selected, but in terms of its kind, they confirm the impression of fewer types and a strong presence of complex and representational decoration. The first LM IIIA2 deposit comes from pits 10 and 11. The percentage of decoration is extremely high (c.80%) and the breakdown is not very different from the reference sample (see fig. 5.84). A final LM IIIA2 sample comes from the House of the High Priest, all contexts from which were examined together, to balance out differences between them that are context-specific. It is interesting that even though this originates from an Evans excavation, its study alone would not necessarily suggest that it was heavily selected. It seems very likely that any intervention was limited. This is also clear in the overall view of the deposit, which is very similar to the SEX sample, with the exception of the decorated categories being more heavily represented (making up a higher percentage). In terms of the breakdown, we see the same four categories, with relative frequencies that are very similar to pits 10 and 11. Overall, we can note a certain

stability in characteristics, even between contexts, and no justification for separation into sub-phases based on data of this quality, and at this resolution.

LM IIIB

LM IIIB deposits from the SEX excavations and the SWH are also relatively problematic, since even when combined the sample size is small (see Table 5.64 and Charts 5.68-70). It is also a problem that the two assemblages making up the sample have different characteristics. With only two to compare against one another, it is difficult to evaluate which one is most representative, and the comparison with selected deposits did not prove to be very helpful in that area either. About half of the sherds are smoothed-slipped, and 28% are monochrome, while burnished-polished surfaces still appear, although in smaller numbers. A total 22.3% of sherds are decorated (see fig. 5.85). Several kinds of decoration have a strong presence, especially banded, which makes up 44% of the decoration and is the third most common surface treatment. Simple monochrome decoration is also quite common (41.7% of the decorated). The only other two kinds of decoration are representational (9.5%) and complex (2.4%). Overall, assuming that the sample is representative, the differences are a small decrease in the quantity of decoration, as well as its complexity.

LM IIIC

In LM IIIC, whose representative assemblage comes from different zembils from the SEX excavations, there is greater variability (see Table 5.65 and Charts 5.71-73). The quantity of burnished-polished pottery has decreased again, and a monochrome surface is once again the most common, followed by smoothed-slipped. Banded and simple monochrome decoration are both very significant presences in the wider sample, making up 25.1% and 14.7% of the assemblage respectively. Representational decoration (by this period looking very different, as the figures show, and also with fuzzier boundaries between this and non-representational decoration) continues being important, making up 4.7% of the whole sample (see fig. 5.86). Decoration is more common now than in any other period: 46.5% of all sherds carry some sort of decorative treatment, the frequency of which follows the part they play in the wider assemblage. Banded decoration is now back to first place, found on more than half (54%) of the decorated sherds and simple geometric decoration on

about a third of decorated sherds (31.6%). Some 10% of decorated sherds carry motifs interpreted as representational and 4% complex geometric motifs — both categories increasing from the previous phase.

The evolution of complexity in decoration through time in the Stratigraphic Museum deposits

Table 5.66 shows, and Chart 5.74 plots, the percentage of decoration through time. The aggregate LM I data have been removed from this stage, since it has been hypothesized that their composition is relevant to issues other than the phase. As can be see on Chart 5.75, when a simple trend line is applied, there is a better fit with the data when LM IIIA is removed as well, a period which was described earlier as providing only a small sample which is likely not representative. If, therefore, these two phases are ignored at this stage, it is possible to roughly describe a development of decoration through time: starting out more rare, and gradually increasing until MM II, reaching a plateu for the first time and then remaining relatively stable until a rise in late MM III. From here, an apparent plateau is sustained until LM II, with a possible peak within this at LM IA. LM IB is absent, but it is very likely that it could have been as high, or higher, if sufficient appropriate samples were available, in which case it would be more accurate to talk of a peak, rather than a plateau. This stage is followed by a slight drop of decoration in LM III A and B, assuming that the small sample we have is a representation of a real trend, and finally rapidly increases again in LM IIIC. This corresponds well with what we know of the development of the town of Knossos, where in LM IIIB we see a general decrease in activity, limited construction and partial re-occupation of some of the elite houses. Finally, late in LM IIIB or early in IIIC, settlement shifts to new zones in Knossos, focusing to the west of the former core of the site and no longer rebuilding earlier structures (Hatzaki 2004: 121-125). So, in LM IIIB, perhaps accompanied by a diminution in population numbers and extent of occupation, decoration becomes weaker as a phenomenon as well, raising questions about the connection that existed beforehand between the Palace and the production and consumption of complex decorated pottery.

Now that we have seen how decoration behaves overall, it is time to compare it with complex decoration, as defined above. The percentages can be seen in Table 5.67, and complex decoration has been plotted twice, once against decoration in

general (Chart 5.76) and once on its own (Chart 5.77). These allow us to see two different things. On the first graph, it is clear that the quantities of complex decoration generally follow that of decoration over time. When one decreases or increases, so does the other. This supports an impression that begun to suggest itself during this research project, that more elaborate decoration often accompanies an increase in decoration in general, and now this can be shown for Knossos. It is helpful, therefore, as well as closer to the archaeological picture, to see ceramic decoration in general as a unified and interrelated general class, of which complex decoration is the most elaborate example, rather than fully isolate the complex decorated component. This chart, however, is formatted according to the higher numbers of overall decoration, and slightly suppresses the variation in the percentages of complex decoration, which can be seen much better on its own, in Chart 5.77. This helps us make another important observation: that elaborateness might follow roughly the trends of decoration in general, but it seems as if it increases and decreases more sharply, forming less plateaus and more peaks and valleys. So, we can see that after a small drop in MM III early, complexity increases rapidly to reach its highest point in LM IA (and likely LM IB as well), decreases slightly in the LM II and then falls very sharply in LM IIIB, even though the decrease in decoration in general is much smaller. This can even be seen in Chart 5.76, where in decoration overall, the LM III B is above the mean line, while complex decoration is below. Then, it increases again in LM IIIC, almost reaching the levels of LM II.

To sum up, decoration in general tends to increase over time, with some setbacks, and can form plateaus or small peaks, as in MM II and LM IA. Complexity in decoration usually follows these trends, but greatly emphasises both the rise and the fall in decoration, and there is a much clearer peak in the Neopalatial, with a high level sustained in the following period. Then, this intensity in the presence of decoration seems to partly return after the palaces stop being a major influencing factor. However, caution is necessary here because, although the overall increase in LM IIIC in very clear, the increase in complex decoration might be slightly misleading, since its frequency in proportion to all decoration is not much higher (from around 12% in LM IIIB to around 14% in LM IIIC). The low percentages in MM II are surprising, where with Kamares pottery and the importance of polychromy it might be expected to be higher, and perhaps in this case the examination of specific

deposits in context can throw light on why that is so. It is useful, in regard to this issue, to remember that almost in all cases we are talking about secondary deposits, and that none of the unselected ones, which form the core of this study, originates directly from the Palace, so it is likely that under different circumstances, we would (as some of the published deposits might indicate) get a different view of developments.

A long-term view of the Stratigraphic Museum deposits from the perspective of semi-coarse pottery

So far, all discussion has focused on fine pottery, as a category more sensitive to changes and chronologically fine-tuned. This section takes a different point of view, and focuses on semi-coarse pottery. This kind of fabric has been greatly neglected in the theoretical literature concerning decoration, as well as under-used and under-appreciated, especially in Crete. Semi-coarse pottery in certain contexts offers us the opportunity to ask what further we can say about decoration, beyond its role in display. The separate discussion of semi-coarse vessels is, moreover, specific to certain regions. By way of contrast, the study of Blue Painted pottery in New Kingdom Egypt revealed very different characteristics of decoration on medium-sized storage vessels in a fabric containing many inclusions, and arguably playing a role in display, in a different way to serving or consumption vessels which would move around, or be held in the hands. In Knossos, in terms of shapes, and their differences from fine pottery, small open vessels are not the most frequent ones, but medium closed are, serving for transport, serving and short-term storage of liquids. Belonging to this category are also some highly elaborate Dark-on-Light Lustrous decorated jars (called “Palace Style”), but these have not been a factor in this study, since no sherds belonging to this category were found in unselected deposits. Medium open vessels also make up a large component of the semi-coarse, as would perhaps be expected, and their presence is stronger in MM III. It is not entirely clear what specific practices are the cause of this period-specific anomaly.

Table 5.68 and Chart 5.78 show the data from the same representative samples used for the analysis of fine pottery. Compared with the equivalent data for fine pottery, some impressions immediately jump out. Firstly, in most periods, decorated semi-coarse pottery is less frequent than decorated fine pottery. The sole exception is

LM IIIB, which is also the only time when semi-coarse decoration deviates so obviously from the fine. The difference in quantity could have a lot to do with the underrepresentation of simple decoration from medium closed vessels in sherd deposits, but if we only take into account the relative changes in frequency within the semi-coarse category, it still seems that the social changes that took place at Knossos and affected the production of fine pottery were less important for the kind of decoration that is found on semi-coarse vessels. The frequency of decoration on semi-coarse pottery follows the changes in the frequency of decoration on fine pottery, but it is structured in a different way. Starting from a pretty stable presence in the beginning and middle of the Middle Minoan (this time the MM II period does not stand out at all in terms of overall decoration), decoration starts increasing at a very steady rate until LM IIIC, as can be seen by how closely it fits a linear trend. It seems therefore that the practice of decoration of semi-coarse pottery expands more and more over time, with no significant setbacks.

It would be going into too much detail to fully present at this point the analysis of the components that make up the decoration on semi-coarse pottery, but complex decoration can act as a rough measure, defined and calculated in the same way as for the fine pottery. As we can see (Table 5.69 and Chart 5.79), this follows the line of the fine pottery even more closely than the general percentage of decoration did, at least up to LM I, with a sharper fall in MM III and a gentler increase up to the same peak in LM IA. Yet what is a small decrease in complexity in LM II fine pottery, is a great one in the semi-coarse, bringing the percentage so low that it actually gives the impression of increasing in LM IIIB (if LM IIIA data are any reliable indication for this type of pottery, the increase is actually from LM II to LM IIIA, followed by a slight decrease). Finally, the percentage rises again in LM IIIC, following decoration in general, but it does not reach the same levels as fine pottery. If the data on this subject are reliable, then perhaps what we are seeing is a fluctuation over time in the investment of major effort in some shapes and categories of pottery, represented by semi-coarse fabrics, at the same time as a basic standard of decoration steadily increases.

The decoration of pottery, elites and social negotiation

In this last section I am going to look again at the evidence provided by the deposits in order to discuss the place of decorated pottery in social life, and especially in the negotiation of prestige and power by elites and other groups. This brings us to theoretical issues raised by this project about the role of decoration and the ways it can operate. It also helps us connect the assemblages with the wider developments that take place in society.

Perhaps the biggest theme that Minoan pottery is involved in (in terms of intensity of archaeological and theoretical preoccupation), is feasting, the large scale consumption of food and drink, presumably provided by someone and enjoyed by others, in which context the utensils used for consumption are central, visible and might acquire special meaning. Drinking vessels in particular, as objects used for individual consumption, have especially drawn interest, with their diversity of appearance and their direct associations with bodily gestures and practices (Knappett 2005: 137-139). Types of cups, in particular, multiply in the Protopalatial, and at the same time their qualities start diversifying, with strong distinctions between the plainer and the decorated, as well as more individualised and distinct ones. This starts at the same time as social hierarchies become more pronounced, as can be seen in the creation of the palaces. Technology and production play an important part in this process, with wheel-thrown pottery starting to become more widespread in MMIB (Knappett 2005: 156-158). This new technique is adopted for high-quality vases in its early stages, providing an interesting contrast with other areas, such as Egypt, where the potter's wheel quickly led to efficient mass production, a contrast which also corresponds closely to the continuing elevated value of decorated pottery in the Aegean. New technologies and their use in later periods to produce impressive technical achievements, such as eggshell ware, could contribute to the prestige of the vessels, giving them an almost magical quality.

These diverse kinds of pottery are often found together in one location, the simpler ones co-existing with the ones with more elaborate decoration. Much has been made of the assemblage of cups found in Deposit A in Knossos described above. There is no doubt that the impression is intriguing, with the different shapes showing an internal hierarchy from plainer to more complex, with a pyramidal structure and

single goblet standing above the rest (see fig. 5.87). This implies that the person using this vessel would have stood out as it does, the decoration drawing attention and singling them out, and the whole collection of vessels reproducing the social hierarchy in clay, or producing an ideal vision of how that hierarchy should be, and in that process creating it. In general terms, it is difficult to argue with this distinction, since the pattern is repeated in site after site. In the contexts examined in Quartier Mu, it is telling that those that have large collections of drinking vessels have only a few really elaborate examples standing out. These collections are also interpreted as being used as part of episodes of consumption, perhaps with a ceremonial aspect. The doubts that do exist about the integrity of Deposit A do not invalidate the general observation. It is also important to remember that elaborate cups can be a medium of elite display, but even Kamares pottery is found in a variety of contexts and sites, although the scale of the presence, best demonstrated by the deposits from the Stratigraphic Museum, is a more reliable measure than simple presence/absence (Schoep 2006).

The use of decorated pottery in these contexts could invest it with associations, making it an index of this kind of consumption activity which they could recall at a point in time removed from the activity itself (Knappett 2005: 154-155). This integrates the appearance of the vessel, which plays an important role in the creation of the original meaning at the time of use in consumption, with the associations of the context, which in turn become attached to the object. At this point it is useful to recall the study of decoration in general and the observation that one of its functions is to draw people in and attach them to objects and the projects that they are part of, as well as adhere the object to the activity. What the study of the Aegean refines on that is showing this process as highly context-specific; I am not arguing that decorated pottery was created specifically for use in feasts, only that it can be employed in that way, and that there might be specific social occasions and circumstances of production, supported by social and political structures, when decorated pottery could be so employed. This is why it is necessary to study the characteristics of elaboration — because it is never limited to a single association.

If there is no exclusive presence of specific vessels in specific contexts and there is a great degree of relativity, then how do we know that a vessel is special in a

context that we read as exceptional, beyond pure assumption? Firstly, we have to consider affordances: such a vessel has the potential to stand out. Then, there is contrast: the vessel is placed in a group of objects where it does stand out. Finally, there can also be associations with an activity, such as large-scale drink consumption, as in Knossos, (restricted to an occasion, not in general purpose contexts) or repeated sets of consumption vessels in a setting of negotiation of social and economic relationships, as in Mallia and perhaps Pseira as well. When all these factors coincide, it is reasonable to consider a special role and place for certain vessels. Finally, we also need to consider the place of elaborate decorated pottery in the broader scale of decoration: the data from Knossos, particularly on the spikes in the quantity of decoration and their social background show a relationship with palatial activity, while decoration on semi-coarse pottery (effectively standing in for simple decoration) does not.

Conical cups, in the Neopalatial found in much greater numbers and plainer and more standardised than ever before, are central to this discussion of large-scale consumption (Driessen *et al*. 2002: x). This increase in quantity and mass production is the other side of the elaboration discussed above, with the need for large quantities of tableware to be used at large events, as well as domestic contexts, and at the same time maintaining the distinction, as seen in the Protopalatial, between the large numbers of undifferentiated pottery and those that stand out. It should also be noted that decoration is not the only way of placing emphasis on a vessel, and there are other indications that plain shapes, such as conical cups, could have special significance in certain settings, evoking group identity and the event they were part of (Hamilakis 2002: 196-198). Decoration is, however, stressed here as a medium, since this is the focus of the study.

In the context of Minoan Crete, the questions about decoration can more or less be split in two. On the one hand we have the elite interest in pottery and its involvement in their lives and strategies, which has been analysed above. On the other hand, we have large quantities of pottery that is simply decorated, but decorated none the less, a characteristic which should not be completely set aside for the benefit of studying exclusively delicate rounded cups. Knappett (2005: 137) mentions that there has been little attempt to talk about the meaningfulness of “ordinary objects in

ordinary contexts", and hopefully this work will contribute towards this. That is where comparative studies come especially in handy, since they brightly highlight differences such as these and draw attention to them. A town with no clear palatial associations, such as Pseira, shows that there is still elaborately decorated pottery present, but in a different context than direct competition (by which I mean the kind of competition via juxtaposition, which we can see at other sites and deposits), that of a complex model of a settlement with the different households carrying out diverse and complimentary activities, where division by wealth and status is not simple, at least on the basis of the archaeological remains (Betancourt 1999: 297-302). In terms of structure, Betancourt suggests that the members of the diverse households could have ties to higher authorities in a hierarchical system, leading up to the elites, in a system that is similar to the idea of factions, with their members sharing characteristics in their lives and connections despite their social divisions.

There is a range of possibilities as to why the end of the palace system could have an effect in pottery decoration. First of all, there is the direct effect of the palace as a large consumer and a motivator for the production of specific kinds of pottery. In addition, an overall smaller population means that there is also a smaller market for consumption. Finally, the changes in the social system can also mean the end of a way of life that required a particularly elaborate material culture, and this cannot be expected to be immediately replaced by a different system. In LM IIIC, however, (and we have seen in Chapter 4 suggestions that similar developments take place elsewhere in the Aegean at the same time), as the community recovers and moves towards new forms of organization, decoration becomes a common practice again, this time presumably without top-down guidance.

Discussion and conclusions

This project started with the observation that there are differences in the role of pottery decoration across the Eastern Mediterranean, exemplified in the opposites of Crete and Egypt. This difference was observed in a study of the pottery at a wider scale. It is now possible to assert confidently, having analysed first-hand the impressive quantity of decorated pottery in Knossos, combined with data elsewhere in Crete, that it is real.

This association of at least some kinds of pottery with status could suggest that common materials did preserve an aesthetic component for all their users, but the "upper rung" of the same category of objects could be appropriated by the elite and used for their own purposes of display. The differences that I have shown between deposits at Knossos which are associated with the Palace and those which are not, especially in the presence of polychromy, as well as the coincidence of the first increase in complexity of decoration with the establishment of the Palace, suggest that we should keep in consideration the potential of pottery to be a subject of appreciation and status competition even at the highest level. I would propose that these developments are related, and that the distinguishing of elites in that period drives the production of elaborate culture, which embraces pottery to a degree. Not only are there vessels which are very complex in their creation and adornment, they are also juxtaposed with simpler ones, illustrating how they could have been used to create and emphasize differences.

An interesting association that shows the internal division in pottery and at the same time the presence of decoration in diverse contexts has even been noted in conical cups at Knossos: these simple shapes are more often painted in domestic contexts than in the palaces, where the same shapes are plain and other, more elaborate forms have decoration (Gillis 1990: 34-36; 40-41). It has been suggested that one of the processes leading to the formation and solidifying of elites and their standing apart is the creation of a high culture, which is available to them only, while objects that could be widely available such as pottery are not a part of this high culture (Schoep 2006). For Crete, some pottery is included in this sphere of elite interest, with arguments being made for partial control of production, as in Mallia, or a large investment of time and effort to create added value, as can be seen in the most elaborate examples, which makes pottery appropriate for elite consumption and limits its availability. Changes and innovation also allow prestige objects to be available to a larger part of the population, while the elite remains ahead. Again, attention must be drawn to the observation that what is probably the highest peak of decoration coincides with the Neopalatial period, which is especially invested in the creation of valuable objects in a variety of media, which can be used to emphasize distinctions between people. In this process of adopting materials, and turning even the ones that are part of everyday life into objects possessed by few, elites once again come to

embrace clay. It could perhaps then be argued that this is a similar relatively fixed power structure as seen in other societies, with different materials involved. However, different material means for the negotiation of power influence the nature of the power — it is not possible to just scale it up or down and leave the rest of the structure intact, and we have to come to the conclusion that if the means of negotiation are different, so is the entire structure, which corresponds well to theories about the nature of Minoan society outlined in Chapters 1 and 4.

What we observe in the material record of Crete is the operation of multiple scales of hierarchical complexity that also intersect at points. The investment into the creation of elaborate pottery and the use of the material in large-scale events are part of such scales, seen in the data from the studied samples from the Stratigraphic Museum deposits. These focus more on peaks, which are one expression of social and decorative complexity. On the other hand, we see the steady presence of simple decoration. Observations on decoration from other sites, both simple and complex, also contribute: the contexts include direct display and comparison (as in group gatherings at Malia or potential equipment for the same at Palaikastro), ceramics present in and framing everyday life, including a more dispersed presence of complexity (as in Mochlos), or a privileged but non-palatial setting, as in Pseira, connecting the site with Central Crete through references to shared ritual practices (Betancourt 2004: 25) at the same time as maintaining distinctiveness precisely through pottery decorating practices. With this impression therefore of diversity and flexibility in the employment of decorated pottery, and the secure image of its wide social presence, we can move on to a case study from Egypt and start building a basis for comparison.

Chapter 6. Egyptian Blue Painted pottery: a case study in exception

Introduction

The study of New Kingdom Blue Painted pottery is important for understanding when and how pottery decoration was used around the Eastern Mediterranean. As I discussed in Chapter 1, focusing on weak points, that is moments of change and outstanding instances, is a very useful way of approaching pottery decoration. Decoration with blue paint in Egypt stands out in two ways: it appears within a potting tradition which produces vessels that are overwhelmingly considered uniform, mass-produced and rarely decorated (Baines 2007: 291, 305; Kozloff 1998: 110; Hope 1982: 77) and it uses a colour which is almost never encountered in the decoration of pottery, and which will therefore occupy some of the discussion here. In Chapter 4, I discussed extensively how the initial impression of complete absence of decoration must be nuanced and sketched a more complex picture, but there is no doubt that this New Kingdom style stands out both in terms of numbers and in elaboration (Hope, 1991). This makes Blue Painted pottery an excellent ground to examine the characteristics of the use of decoration: if we manage to get closer to interpreting the relatively sudden interest in the decoration of pottery in such quantity and with such consistency in a highly structured culture where it seems to be something new, we might be closer to understanding the possibilities offered by decorated pottery in general and particularly the potential drives behind it.

I start this chapter by examining the general characteristics of Blue Painted pottery in terms of appearance and technology, which are essential to understanding precisely why it is so outstanding, and follow some of the conclusions regarding production. Following that, I will examine its development through time and explore the origins of the style by embedding it in the context of Egyptian pottery decoration, such as it is, since the Middle Kingdom. Then, after a broader discussion of the ware's geographic distribution, I will turn to data from Egyptian sites where Blue Painted pottery is most common and analyse specific contexts where quantifiable information is available. Finally, I will draw together the data on the appearance, distribution and use of this pottery, and suggest some interpretations of its development and use at this particular point in space and time, and the place it held in New Kingdom social life.

Methods and approaches in the study of Blue Painted pottery

I discussed in Chapter 3 the role of pottery studies in Egyptian archaeological traditions, and mentioned that in this context, 'ware' is defined as the combination of a particular fabric with a specific surface treatment, and also that shape is emphasized as a source of information, especially on dating. For the purposes of this chapter, it has been sufficient to use the ware categories as a source of information on surface treatments, where that information was made available, and the general shape categories, which are enough to give an indication of possible associations with function, and are also easier to align with the descriptions of pottery in the rest of the thesis.

In the absence of more detailed data, shape and type catalogues (which are the most common kind of detailed pottery publication) have been used here to give an idea of the presence or absence of Blue Painted pottery (which is always distinguished as a separate 'ware'), while the range and diversity of Blue Painted types represented in a corpus can be a rough indication of the intensity of that presence. Following the general methodological principles set out in Chapter 3, the information that ideally would be available for every site is how much Blue Painted pottery there is in relation to the total quantity of pottery and the other types of decorated pottery on a site, what its distribution is, and the range of forms on which it is found and the kinds of motifs used. The last two could give an idea about the connections between pottery and its use, and the motifs can be used to assess the complexity of the decoration. However, in the Egyptian case, there rarely is a convergence of all these kinds of information from a single site, so for practical reasons a combined approach has been adopted, drawing from each source the kind of data that are available in order to collectively reinforce the conclusions. A final, important, note on the subject of decorative complexity: in most case studies, this has been judged on the basis of rough estimates on the investment of time and energy. In the case of Blue Painted pottery however, the "base-line" of complexity should be set higher than the motifs alone would imply. Even the simplest banded decoration conceals very high investment through the pigment itself, from the acquisition of the raw materials to the complex process of its creation, which will be outlined in the following section.

The characteristics and production of Blue Painted pottery

The production of Blue Painted pottery starts during the 18th Dynasty, particularly from the reign of Amenhotep III (1388-1351/50 BC) and stops at some point in the 20th Dynasty, after Ramesses III (1183/82-1152/51 BC) (Hope 1982: 77, 1989: 56). The blue colour can be used in combination with a variety of surface treatments, but by far the most common is on a surface slipped cream/pink or white (Aston 2003: 151; Hope 1989: 7-9), which is observed consistently across different sites and periods, perhaps for practical reasons of highlighting the colour against a light surface. The relationship between the blue paint and the vessel surface can be further complicated through practices such as covering the designs with slips and painting a new design on top, essentially a form of surface recycling. The essential characteristic to keep in mind for now, however, is that the blue pigment and the vessels that carry it are fully integrated with the habitual range of ceramic production practices.

This kind of decoration is also associated with particular fabrics, especially Nile Silt B2 in the Vienna system, a silty fabric tempered with mineral and organic components, mostly chaff (Aston 1999: 2-3, 19). The same decoration can also be found on the other common fabric category in Egypt, the calcareous Marl clay, but it is more rare. The shapes of Blue Painted pottery are usually those of the regular Egyptian repertoire but they can also be manipulated into more elaborate forms (Aston, 2003: 151). The blue pigment has been shown by chemical analysis to be cobalt aluminate, a colorant also used in the same period for blue faience and glass. The source of the raw material has not been definitely identified, but the alum sheets of the Dakhlah and Kharga oases in the western desert are likely sources (Bachmann *et al*. 1980). Additionally, a synthetic element is necessary for its manufacture: The product of precipitation from an aqueous solution of soluble cobalt compound and alum, with ammonium or sodium carbonate acting as precipitants, is a gel, which is filtered out of the solution and heated to 800-1000 degrees. The cobalt compounds react with the aluminum oxide and change into cobalt oxides, from which the blue spinel CoAl2O4 is produced. This indicates that Blue Painted pottery required specialised knowledge, resources and time investment for the creation of the colour alone. The process was developed for the first time in the New Kingdom and subsequently the technique was lost at its end, until as late as 1804 AD (Aston 1998:

57; Arnold and Bourriau 1993: 101-102). Blue Painted pottery is not actually quite the only pottery where a blue colour appears in this period: in the New Kingdom there is also a style called Polychrome pottery which is more rare and found mostly in funerary contexts (Shortland *et al*. 2006). This is distinguished from Blue Painted pottery proper by two essential features: the blue colour on polychrome is not cobalt, but comes from blue frit, and the colours are applied on the vessel post-firing, unlike on Blue Painted pottery, and are therefore far less stable.

Blue paint is used to depict motifs that are in their majority floral and linear, most commonly blue lotus flowers and petals. The drawings can be very elaborate and more rarely they include animals, hieroglyphs and river or marsh scenes, which, as we will see, could have more specific associations. In addition to painting, other techniques are also used to decorate these vessels, such as incision and relief, making them some of the most complex pottery produced in ancient Egypt (Hope 2001: 26; Kozloff 1998: 110-111). Relief is used to manipulate and model the walls of vases, forming ridges and grooves. The effects of manipulations such as incision and relief will be also discussed later in the chapter in regard to the connections they might make with other materials. The most complex examples have faces modelled on their walls, especially those of the gods Hathor and Bes. Applied elements could also be added, separate pieces of clay which are attached onto the surface (Aston 1998: 34). It is common for decoration to be more complex on one side of the vessel, creating the impression of a front and a back side, especially if it takes the form of a garland (see fig. 6.1), which can even be "tied" at the back of the vessel. This is further emphasized on some examples where the sides are divided by black, and some elements, such as incision, can be restricted on one side (Aston 1998: 56; Hope 1982: 88-96, 1989: 7-9, 2001: 43-51).

The structure of the designs is carefully and consistently executed. Sites where a large corpus of such pottery has been found give the opportunity to study the vessels and identify the rules behind the application of the designs in a specific area. Such a study has been carried out by Rose (2007: 20-28) for Amarna (see figs. 6.2 and 6.3) and it offers a good example of how regular this decoration can be, as well as offering information on the process of production. The elaborateness of some of the pottery indicates that a few potters might have been specialised in the manufacture of specific

types (Hope 1989: 16, 2001: 8). Similarly, the standardization of the designs and motifs with only limited variation in the details, as well as their combination with particular shapes and the regularity which seems to govern their placing on the vessel, suggests the existence of only a few workshops, which can be tentatively separated based on the different rules covering the designs and their application on the pot.

Specific assemblages, such as the Amarna one, can also give indications of the different steps of production, and it is likely that these would have been similar across different centres. This leads to some interesting observations: the initial stages were surface preparation and treatment, commonly the application of a light-coloured slip, as we have seen. These appear to have been identical for the pottery intended for decoration and the rest (Rose 2007: 19-21), leading to the question of whether decoration on pottery should be considered an addition or a separate conception from the beginning. The finds from Amarna also offer concrete confirmation of the on-site production of Blue Painted pottery in the form of a single Blue Painted waster, a surface find (Rose 2007: 18). The area of production has not been located, and a pottery workshop excavated offered no evidence that Blue Painted was among the kinds of pottery produced there (Kirby 1989: 30-35).

It has been suggested that pottery production in Egypt is organised on the basis of different realms of production, some of which are in a scaled or hierarchical relationship while others exist independently, or at the sidelines of the system (Nicholson 1992). The state was a major producer, manufacturing at a large scale vessels distributed to those working directly for it in royal building and craft projects. Under central control were also specialised workshops producing the highest quality tableware, which is the place of Blue Painted pottery in the larger scheme. At the same time, the everyday needs of elite houses and estates were covered by their own attached workshops. In parallel to the whole system there is the potential for the craftsmen actually making the pottery to act as independent agents, conducting private work and distributing it semi-independently of the larger institutions to which they might, at the same time, belong. This is not as clearly documented in the case of pottery, but parallels can be drawn with other industries, such as faience and glass, for which the practice is well established, as demonstrated by the written records concerning the activities of the artisans of Deir el-Medina (Shortland 2000: 81),

which indicate that artisans undertook private commissions with the knowledge of their overseers.

These modes of production have direct implications for the distribution of ceramics. These could be obtained directly from the state, often as containers for something else, as part of the distribution of other products (a possible example of which we will have the opportunity to study). They could also be produced for the elite in their own workshops, although it is likely that this would not include some of the more specialised and limited wares, such as Blue Painted. Finally, there also existed more flexible paths of distribution, both through potters' and clients' initiatives, and with material trickling down gradually through the system, being privately traded, bartered for, recycled and reused in ways that we can imagine, if not always precisely track, based on the contexts where Blue Painted pottery ends up.

The development of Blue Painted pottery in context and an overview of chronology

Before understanding the part Blue Painted pottery could play in Egyptian society, we need to look at how it came into being. Levantine "Red, White and Blue Ware" (henceforth RWB) offers an interesting potential precursor. This style was first observed on a small number of sherds at Tell Beth Shean and it consists of reddish/brown and blue linear decoration on a white ground, mostly used on open shapes and jars. Its frequency peaks in the MB II period and declines following that (Maier 2002b: 228-236). The same ware has also been found in southwestern and coastal Israel, but not at Hazor or Tel Dan, it is therefore limited to the southern half of the southern Levant. No chemical analyses of the pigment has been carried out, but if it were cobalt-based, Egypt could be a possible source, although huntite and azurite are other candidate minerals, and, given the lack of evidence for the development of cobalt-producing technology pre-New Kingdom, are perhaps more likely.

The pre-existence of another Blue Painted style in an area with which Egypt had a lot of exchanges cannot be ignored. Aston (2006: 73) has suggested that it could have been an inspiration for Egyptians to start experimenting with pottery painting when they came in contact with the style through the Tuthmosid campaigns in the

southern Levant. If we did manage to link RWB with Blue Painted pottery, we would have traceable evidence for the transfer of pottery painting practices from the Levant into Egypt. Such specific linkages are, however, untenable on the basis of current evidence, since no technological link has been established through the pigments and, more importantly, there is more than a century separating RWB from Tuthmosis, let alone Blue Painted pottery, and there is currently no evidence suggesting how the practice would have bridged that gap.

There are also possible relations with other kinds of pottery such as the early New Kingdom "brown-and-red" painted pottery, which might not be an actual predecessor but it demonstrates and develops the taste for decoration of containers (Arnold and Bourriau 1993: 100). It would then perhaps be more productive, when looking at the process of the development of Blue Painted pottery, to think less in terms of a direct ancestor, and more about the combination of circumstances favourable to the creation of this specific kind of decorated pottery, and the pool of influences and practices it could draw upon. I discussed in Chapter 4 how the early New Kingdom ceramic practices came out of a period of regional and ceramic diversity and exposure to a variety of practices. As the Egyptian state was unified again, centralised political power became stronger. The stimulation of interest in ceramic decoration existed already, but now this could gradually take the form supported by this reinforcement of central authority and be integrated into a centralised mode of production, using materials that were also centrally acquired, controlled and distributed.

This collapse of the early New Kingdom (small-scale) decorative diversity into a single style is possibly demonstrated by the fact that decoration will be mostly limited to Blue Painted pottery soon after the style's appearance, to the exclusion of other categories, as the disappearance of other styles, such as splash and drip decoration shows (Aston 2006: 73). Additionally, this feedback between Blue Painted and other kinds of decorated pottery suggests that they were understood and used as examples of the same category, despite the differences in elaboration and overall quantity. Blue Painted pottery itself is not an inert material, introduced once and remaining a constant thereafter, as Table 6.1 shows. Early examples show characteristics consistent with a phase of experimentation, such as a wide range of

motifs, which later fell out of use, or the association with a greater variety of fabrics (instead of mostly Silt), or different ratios of colours on the vessels' surface. Additionally, these are found in the region of Memphis, which is the administrative centre of the early 18th Dynasty. The characteristics described in the previous section as typical are established around the reign of Amenhotep III, a significant social context, as later discussion will show. Following that, there is a gradual decrease in the diversity of motifs and the use of representational ones, with relative quantities of Blue Painted vessels remaining high. In the diachronic changes in the pottery's characteristics, therefore, we are seeing a process of development starting from the administrative and palatial core of the New Kingdom at the time, and leading to decreasing range and variability, a trajectory similar to the one suggested for the development and establishment of the style itself.

The distribution of Blue Painted pottery: a broad view

Before moving on to the analysis of the distribution and quantity of Blue Painted pottery in specific contexts, it is important to look first at the patterns of overall distribution, because when this information is combined with intra-site distribution, an interesting pattern emerges. There is universal agreement that Blue Painted pottery is very strongly concentrated at sites that have royal residences and a strong presence of the court and central administration. The main such sites are Memphis/Saqqara, Malkata, Amarna, Thebes and Qantir (Aston 1998: 55, see fig. 6.4 and Chart 6.1). Continuing research is extending that list, but newer additions such as Gurob (Gasperini, pers. comm.) and Abydos (which could prove to be a major findspot, see Budka 2006) have not altered the impression of the character and official associations of the sites where Blue Painted pottery is found.

The fact that this is a meaningful distribution and not just a result of research priorities is demonstrated by the results of excavation at more peripheral settlements, such as Elephantine (Aston 1999: 19), where the latest investigations concerning the strata when Blue Painted pottery is most common elsewhere have refined our understanding. Firstly, they suggest that in the case of (at least some) peripheral settlements we are talking of scarcity rather than complete absence. They also throw further light on the relationship between this type of pottery and official activity,

which parallels the patterns of distribution in palatial sites. The implications of this connection are very helpful in understanding under what circumstances elaborate decoration appears and how the pottery might be acquired and received. Blue Painted pottery at Elephantine makes up 1% of the sherd count at the peak of its presence, in Stratum 8, which dates to the 19th Dynasty, and 0.3% of the preceding Stratum 9, contemporary with the Amarna period (Dreyer *et al*. 2008: 121-131). The phase of larger concentration, Stratum 8, is the same as a peak in royal activity at the site and region, expressed in the number of inscriptions and the construction of two station sanctuaries used in festive processions. Additionally, Blue Painted vessels seem to be connected with the activity of the temple and are not integrated with household activities, which, as we will see, is not always the case in the main sites this pottery is associated with (Raue *et al*. 2007: 20).

The association of the type with large centres, and specifically with royal residences, has led Hope (1997: 261) to suggest the possibility that manufacture was connected with the demand for this particular kind of pottery by the royal court and the elite. Apart from the distribution of the actual finds of pottery and the quantities present in each site, there are other indications of concentration that also tie in with production and distribution. As mentioned earlier, the standardization of the decorating motifs and their placement on the vessel, which seems to follow more or less stable patterns, such as the ones uncovered in Amarna, support the idea that there were only a few production centres. It would be easier for these characteristics to remain consistent from vessel to vessel if they were concentrated and regulated rather than dispersed in many different workshops, and the consistency of the whole production process goes beyond simple visual copying. Another argument for a small number of production centres is the very complicated and specialised process of the cobalt pigment production described above, in addition to the acquisition of the raw materials required for it (Hope 2001: 8). At the same time, this restriction has relevance beyond the organization and existence of production centres. As the distribution within sites will show, the structure of the material's distribution also has much to say about the availability of the material in certain sectors of the population and the potential for the establishment of a degree of familiarity with it, affecting its desirability and the potential for its acquisition as it gradually trickles down.

Distribution also has a very clear chronological component, as Chart 6.1 shows, the emphasis on different centres seemingly moving around following royal courts: The first shapes, shown in Table 6.1, are associated with the Memphite region and are soon after adopted by Theban potters. Later in the 18th Dynasty they are also found in short-lived royal sites like Malkata, associated with the residence and celebration of Jubilees of Amenhotep III, and Amarna (Arnold and Bourriau 1993: 100). It seems likely that as the centre moved from site to site, so did some of the potters, attached to the courts. From the end of the reign of Amenhotep III some could have transferred to Amarna, and then again after the abandonment of the site early in the 19th Dynasty the potters working there would have moved to other workshops, such as Thebes (Hope 1991). Similarly, in the Ramesside period, Qantir appears to be the main focus of activity. Unfortunately, the scarcity of references to pottery in Egyptian sources does not allow us to know if this implies the existence of royal potters and what lies behind the transmission of knowledge and practices, such as family or descent groups.

What about finds beyond Egypt? In the Southern Levant, which has a very close relationship with Egypt during the New Kingdom, the quantities of Blue Painted pottery are negligible and the finds sporadic. Amiran (1969: 187-190) mentions only a few fragments of decorated Egyptian pottery of the Amarna period found in a pit at Tell el-Ajjul. However, as with many older publications, it is not always easy to understand whether the author is referring specifically to Blue Painted pottery. The mention of many colours and the inferior quality of paints, which deteriorate under climatic conditions, seems closer to the description of polychrome pottery. It is interesting to wonder what kind of materials ended up at Tell el-Ajjul, given its position at the end of the Sinai route. Intriguingly, this is not the only Sinaite connection of Blue Painted pottery: Sherds decorated with blue bands have also been found by surveys at sites in the northern Sinai, the connecting area between Egypt and the Levant (Le Saout 1991). Perhaps, therefore, what we see here is less deliberate export and trade and more the result of a gradual trickle-down process following open, but limited, lines of communication within Egypt and leading to the potential for very sporadic finds to the north. This would fit well with a model of the presence of the pottery being incidental rather than targeted, either from the Egyptian or the Levantine side.

The direct involvement of Egypt in the southern Levant meant that not only there was a strong influence in material culture but also that there was a physical presence of Egyptians in the area, recognised by locally produced Egyptian household pottery. A series of small 'garrison' centres examined, such as Beth Shean, Tel Aphek, Tel Mor and Tel Sera', showed no Blue Painted pottery, although simpler forms of Egyptian decoration do appear (Martin 2004: 265-277) and a general effort to transfer the New Kingdom atmosphere of material brilliance and colourfulness has been identified (Hulin 2013: 353-365). The situation is similar at Megiddo (Martin 2009) where, despite the known physical presence of garrisons in the 19th and early 20th Dynasty, the resulting increase in the numbers of Egyptian pottery shapes does not include Blue Painted pottery. This shows that Egyptian pottery in the Levant, mostly associated with the presence of Egyptians and not the desire by local elites to acquire or imitate it (Martin 2004: 279), does not include the type most associated with large centres in Egypt itself (Higginbotham 2000: 145-167). At the same time, there seems to be no interest by foreigners in its acquisition either, despite the fact that it stands out from Egyptian pottery production, or otherwise that it is not available to them at all.

Amiran suggests that the lack of decorated Egyptian pottery is due to two factors. The first is that trade between Egypt and the Levant focuses primarily on ceramics as containers for consumable goods, and these are rarely decorated. Jars are the most common Blue Painted shape but these are most often not restricted at the mouth, and are therefore better suited to short-term storage rather than transportation. The second factor is that there is limited interest in exporting the decorated vessels as objects in their own right, since the interest in luxury goods was served by materials of higher intrinsic value, in which Egypt had a tradition (Amiran 1969:187-190). The place of pottery in an Egyptian hierarchy of value, placed in a Levantive context, is graphically illustrated by its absence in a famous dedication relief in Karnak, depicting the booty the campaigns of Thutmose III (pre-dating Blue Painted pottery) brought back from the Levant, organized in graded registers (Sherratt and Sheratt 1991: 361). There is, however, a difference between the rhetorics of empire, and the evidence on the ground, on the basis of which we can see Blue Painted pottery, for a local, Egyptian, consumption context at least, to acquire value and importance. The situation seems to be similar to the South of Egypt, in Nubia, where the survey of sites

by the Scandinavian Joint Expedition (Holthoer 1977: 55, 149) has uncovered only sherds of Blue Painted pottery, with shapes such as funnel-necked jars, which are common in large Egyptian centres, being very rare. This rarity is confirmed by recent excavations (Minault-Gout and Thill 2012: 335-336).

The distribution of Blue Painted pottery: a site-based view

Memphis

The region of Memphis, including Giza, provides a rich funerary record, a concentration of evidence on 18th Dynasty kingship and, as Table 6.1 shows, some early examples of Blue Painted pottery. It also can provide information on domestic patterns of pottery consumption on the basis of the excavations at Kom Rabia, 100 metres west of the small temple of Ptah and executed in parallel with the survey of Memphis (Bourriau and French 1984). The findings from Kom Rabia will be discussed here, while the funerary data from the area will be the subject of a separate section below, following Amarna. The focus of the excavation at Kom Rabia is chronological, and this, in combination with the availability of stratified deposits, make the site a good opportunity to study the developments in Blue Painted pottery over time, as well as the associations with shape. The process of study of the material has focused on closed contexts, from each of which a random sample was selected, of a size relative to the size of the context, in addition to a purposive sample of diagnostic sherds (Bourriau 2010: 4-5).

Blue Painted pottery first appears in level IV, dating in the early 18th Dynasty. Its quantity increases in the next level (IIIb), with a repertoire similar to the contemporary Workmen's Village at Amarna (see Chart 6.1). No quantified information is available concerning this increase, but what we do know is that there is a rise in quantity relative to the previous phase and that new types appear, most of them closed forms and especially tall necked ovoid jars, while the rest are dishes, bowls and globular jars (Bourriau 2010b: 139-157). The number of closed shapes increases even further in phase IIIa, both in terms of the overall range of types (i.e. including non-decorated ones) and of the number of decorated ones, with 18 different types decorated, half of these being tall necked jars (Bourriau 2010b: 179-205, see fig.

6.5). In the same level, in Memphis alone, a type of pottery appears which has an exclusive association with Blue Painted decoration: a shallow, thin-walled and fragile dish that is always decorated on the inside (see fig. 6.6). This feature could be related to other materials, especially faience. There is little information on the motifs on the bodies of all these jar types, since the vessel part most commonly preserved is the rim. On the other hand, there are advantages to this: since rim bands are almost universally used in Blue Painted jars, it ensures that at least the range of types and the overall quantity of decoration is somewhat accurately represented.

Level IIb dates to the early-mid 19th Dynasty and contains the greatest amount of pottery in terms of sheer number of sherds, as well as 22 new types of Blue Painted pottery, more than doubling the number of decorated types. None of these, however, continue into the next phase, although there is an increase in the use of blue paint overall. About 2.5% of all sherds are Blue Painted in this level, dominated by amphorae in Silt B2, funnel-necked jars, and other necked jars (Bourriau 2010b: 227-266, see fig. 6.7). Even though, therefore, the overall quantity of decoration has increased, the diversity of the types on which it is found has actually dropped, and based on the general information on the development of Blue Painted pottery I outlined in the beginning of the chapter, it is probably safe to assume that the diversity of motifs and designs has also fallen. In IIa, the final level in which Blue Painted pottery appears, dating to the mid-late 19th Dynasty, the quantity is down to 1.9% of the assemblage (Bourriau 2010b: 289-317).

The interpretation of the material as a whole by Bourriau notices that the most profound changes in the ceramic repertoire take place in the 18th Dynasty, one of which is the use of blue colour for painted decoration of pottery. This leads to the question of how these changes relate to the establishment of the 18th Dynasty, in which Memphis must have played an important role. Another change noted in the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, which also seems to tie in with the appearance of Blue Painted pottery, is the increase in tableware that is more delicate, more conspicuous and used in large quantities (Bourriau 2010b: 416). A very interesting pattern that appears when we adopt a diachronic view of the data, and take the types and quantities into account, is that there is a shift between the period of the development and early proliferation of the style, and the late 18th and especially the 19th Dynasty:

the focus changes from an interest in a diverse range of fine blue-painted tableware to an emphasis on jars. These associations bring us closer to the questions discussed in the final section, concerning the wider context of the use of Blue Painted pottery.

Malkata

Like other sites included in this research, Malkata, located on the West Bank of Thebes, has been excavated by different expeditions, in different areas, at different times. In 1971-1974 the University of Pennsylvania carried out excavations including the periphery of the palace complex of Amenhotep III, associated with the jubilee festivals celebrated by the pharaoh, and the dump at the West of the site (Bachmann *et al*. 1980). The ceramic material from the late 18th Dynasty has been analysed by Hope as a whole with only general information on the origin of findings (Hope 1989: 3). Some 144,440 sherds, a very robust sample size, were studied and divided into ware families. The most frequent category was undecorated pottery, comprising 96.19% of the assemblage. The second most frequently encountered category was Blue Painted pottery, at 3.70% of the total (Hope 1989: 12-13). These numbers should probably be taken to reflect a minimum of Blue Painted vessels present, since an undecorated sherd from the bottom of a Blue Painted vessel (on jars, the most commonly decorated shape, decoration tends to cover roughly the top third of the vessel) would count toward undecorated (Orton *et al*. 1993: 171). This is somewhat confirmed by the calculations of minimum number of vessels on the basis of rim sherds. From a minimum of 4,991 vessels, 92,8% are undecorated and the second most common category is again Blue Painted, at 6.43%, almost double the proportion than before. The percentages of other types of decoration are very far behind: the second most common is linear decoration which only represents 0.7% of the minimum number of vessels. Hope does not consider decoration to be common, and the percentage might be small in absolute terms but it is not inconsequential in relative ones.

Within the site, Hope describes these proportions as remaining more or less the same, and they are similar to the ones from Amarna, which is analysed below. No detailed data is at present available concerning distribution, but the constancy of the presence of Blue Painted pottery is explicitly stated in the report. The Blue Painted finds come from a variety of different contexts: the complex itself, the mansions and the workmen houses at site J, showing that their use was widespread in other levels of

society, at least in this very specific context of intense attachment and association with a royal complex. Excavations focusing on other parts of the site have confirmed Hope's general assessment of a broad presence, demonstrating the presence of Blue Painted pottery at elite buildings located at Malkata South (Sakurai 1985: 25-43). Mentions of the ware are frequent in the excavation reports, although not accompanied by quantified information on ceramics of any kind. Additionally, kiln wasters at site J reinforce the arguments for local production of the more elaborate pottery in association with the large centres with royal connections (Bachmann *et al*. 1980).

Thebes

The evidence available for Blue Painted pottery elsewhere in Thebes (from which Malkata has been separated due to the distinct character of the complex) is patchy, mainly as a result of the diversity of sites in a vaguely defined area and their long and complicated history of excavation and use. Despite that, they provide some important additions in order to form a well-rounded impression of the distribution and the use of Blue Painted pottery in the New Kingdom. Starting from settlement contexts, some snippets of evidence from preliminary reports offer brief and general but intriguing information on the settlement of Abou el-Goud, a workmen's village which also includes workshops, granaries and a kiln (El-Saghir 1983; 1984). Among the limited ceramic information, it is clearly mentioned that that there are large quantities of decorated sherds, most of them Blue Painted. This high frequency is not phrased in more quantitative terms, but other familiar elements are mentioned, such as consistency in the execution and organisation of the motifs and the presence of more complicated vessels, using elements such as the head of Bes or the figure of Hathor. Restricted as this information might be, if placed next to that from other sites such as Kom el-Rabia and the Workmen's Village at Amarna, a more consistent pattern seems to be emerging in which Abou el-Goud fits very well, and which will be examined in greater detail in the final section. It also highlights how useful even small pieces of information can be in the light of a more general picture.

The evidence from Deir el-Medina also belongs in this section, given the connections of the settlement to the Valley of the Kings. Nagel's publication of the pottery from the Deir el-Medina tombs is the main source of information, in turn

based on the campaigns of 1928, 1929 and 1930 by M.B. Bruyère, whose documentation was considered fragmentary even at the time. The publication focuses on the pottery deposited in tombs, with the addition of some general remarks that only some pottery is decorated and rarely that of daily use. In addition to that, decorated pottery was more likely to attract the attention of looters and therefore less of it survives (Nagel 1938: VI-IX). Blue Painted pottery is present in most tombs whose contents are analysed, mostly with banded decoration. The face and breasts of Hathor are also occasionally modelled on the neck of vessels (see figs. 6.8 and 6.9). Very rare examples also exist picturing marshscapes, including elements such as a bird in flight (Nagel 1938). Overall, this range of decoration has strong parallels to the one encountered in contemporary elite tombs: mostly banded, some depicting Hathor and a few with more complex representational arrangements, a range found in this case in the graves of the people who were associated with the construction of elite tombs.

Excavation in the area of Thebes has largely focused on the burials in the Valley of the Kings, although analysis has only recently focused on ceramics, due to a re-appraisal of their potential as a dating aide. The tomb of Merenptah (KV8) was one of those re-examined and 19th Dynasty Blue Painted material was found from the surface collections outside the tomb, probably originating from the earlier clearances of the tomb or the removal of material by workmen. This included a range of shapes, mostly closed, but also a carinated bowl, all of which have simple floral decoration (Aston *et al*. 1998). This data can be supplemented with information from the funerary temple of Merenptah, the Mansion of a Million Years, in which a sequence of stratified secondary deposits of different dates were found (Aston 2008: 33), fleshing out further the later data. These are presented in catalogue form by deposit, and not by type, listing all vessels found and permitting assessments of quantity. From the early 19th Dynasty filling under the palace floors, 7% of 355 vessels were Blue Painted (2008: 75-103*),* the highest percentage found on the site, decreasing in the late 19th Dynasty 'Priest's House' to 2% of 291 vessels (2008: 109-138) and remaining relatively stable in the only slightly later deposits from under a workshop to 3% of 470 vessels (2008: 141-184).

Only one Blue Painted jar was found in the tomb of Ramesses III (KV 11), one of the few siltware examples to survive the damage from repeated inundations.

Research in the dumps from the tomb of Ramesses IV from clearings of the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation proved very fruitful in terms of the number and variety of pottery in general (Aston and Aston 1987). Blue Painted pottery was a part of the collection, restricted to funnel-necked storage jars. This not only confirms the strong association of decoration with this shape near the end of the period of use, but also places a limit to the end of production, this being the last royal tomb in which it is found.

Amarna

Amarna, the site of the capital of king Akhenaten, has been the subject of archaeological investigation since 1891. The Egypt Exploration Society returned there from 1977 until the present day under the direction of Barry Kemp (Rose 2007: 3). The attraction to the site, offering a complete plan of an ancient Egyptian city, relatively well preserved in desert conditions and dating to a well-defined time-span, is clear. The disadvantage of this is a long and complicated excavation history by different projects, which complicates study. One of the best sources of information on distribution are the series of Amarna Reports produced from 1984 to 1995, containing regular information on the progress of the project, including detailed pottery reports. Many of them concern the excavations in the Workmen's Village, but they also extend beyond that, to the Main City and areas of more distinct character.

In the Workmen's Village, the Main Chapel (Chapel 561, see fig. 6.10) was excavated in full and its ceramic contents come from undisturbed deposits. These are not very rich, since the rooms had been cleaned before abandonment, but they give an impression. Overall, 827 sherds were recovered (see Table 6.2). The highest number of Blue Painted pottery found in the chapel concentrate in the sanctuary itself, where c. 5% of all sherds found belong in this category (see fig. 6.11). No Blue Painted pottery at all was found beyond the Sanctuary and the Inner and Outer Halls (Rose 1986: 101-107). Area 450 was the Chapel Annexe and the site of more and more varied activity, and its ceramic assemblage resembles domestic ones. The highest percentage of Blue Painted pottery is found area iii: c. 3.13% of the sherds, most from vessels broken in situ (see Table 6.3). In the rest of the building Blue Painted was either absent or present in too few sherds to safely estimate percentages (Rose 1986: 107-110). It is interesting to note in this data both that there was more Blue Painted

pottery in the Chapel itself compared to its Annexe, and that inside the Chapel the majority of the Blue Painted pottery was in the sanctuary itself. Is it possible then to draw an association between the assemblages and the function of each area, and to associate the larger quantities of decoration with activities taking place in the sanctuary, such as the dedication and presentation of goods? We can return to this question during the examination of similar contexts in funerary chapels in other sites.

Other areas outside the walls of the Workmen's Village also contain deposits associated with activities there (see fig. 6.12). From Square M10, a quarry pit filled with secondary refuse, we can get a general idea of the quantities in which decorated pottery was present. In the pit, the percentage of decorated pottery increases in the lower strata. In the upper levels, 3.5% of the pottery is Blue Painted and 2.7% decorated with linear motifs, while in the lowest the total percentage of Blue Painted pottery is 6.9%. These numbers are comparable with those drawn from the data at Malkata, although here pottery with linear decoration is much more strongly represented. The differences in numbers between the levels are perhaps related to the relative frequency of different types of pottery which were discarded there, and specifically the increase of closed shapes in silt ware, which were the ones most frequently decorated in blue colour. This change could be reflecting the change in the needs of the inhabitants of the village (Rose 1984: 145-146), for example due to an increase in certain storage practices or changes in the kinds and manner of the goods transferred from the Main City to the Village.

Closely related to this issue of transfers is the Zir-Area, situated just beyond the walls of the domestic part of the village (see fig. 6.12) and covered by emplacements to support storage vessels. This site is interpreted as the point of distribution of water and other commodities coming from the main site, on which we know the Workmen's Village to have been dependent. Written sources from Deir el-Medina also indicate that these specialised villages were supported by rations from the state. Water and food were brought here by porters, measured out and transferred using the jars whose emplacements are still visible and then brought back to the village (Hulin 1984: 77-80). The pottery is exposed and very worn and consists mostly of broken zirs (water-jars) and short-necked amphorae. Decorated pottery, including all types of decoration, was found in all excavation squares with

percentages around 9%, indicating a relatively even spread of types and activities. Blue Painted pottery makes up roughly half of that number, mostly represented by zirs and biconical jars (Rose 1984:150-152).

There is some information on residential contexts from the Workmen's Village, of lesser quality, but sufficient to show that the houses also contained Blue Painted pottery (Rose 1987b: 158). Gate Street 8 was one of the recently excavated houses at the Village where the pottery assemblage was recorded in full. Pottery in the house was studied room by room as well as in total, since sherds have moved around a lot in the deposits, perhaps because they were originally in an upper floor room and fell in the house when it collapsed. Overall, there are only a few remains of Blue Painted vessels, but they have some intriguing characteristics: two are made out of Marl clay, a unique occurrence in the Workmen's Village where all other Blue Painted decoration is on Nile Silt clay. Also, apart from the decorated vessels there are other rare shapes not found anywhere else, showing that houses in this area were not deprived of more sophisticated items (Rose 1987b: 132-137). Both these elements have interesting implications for the acquisition and distribution of decorated pottery: does the presence of Blue Painted pottery in Marl clay indicate that the residents of the Workmen's village were able to acquire vessels from multiple sources? So far we have seen relations with the Main City through the distribution of rations and similar official activities, but this hints that there are other, more complex and indirect, trickle-down processes at work as well, with residents of the Village obtaining a limited quantity of decorated pottery independently through different means.

The Main City at Amarna was the object of investigation since the beginning of excavations at the site and the early excavations were published in *The City of Akhenaten* (Peet and Woolley 1923; Frankfort and Pendelbury 1933), which is more difficult to extract information from than the recent reports. The Blue Painted pottery was not yet distinguished as a category, and the information on distribution is inconsistent, with the presence of painted pottery mentioned occasionally but not in all cases, so that it is not possible to know if the absence of reference also indicates absence of the type. Despite the problems, however, early researchers also made connections which are still accepted, such as that the patterns on this kind of pottery resemble the flower garlands often depicted in friezes in the central halls of the more

elaborate houses. It is possible to venture tentatively into some possible associations, with the awareness of the aforementioned problems (see Table 6.4).

According to the typology set out and followed in *The City of Akhenaten* there are specific types associated with painted decoration: XXV (small store jars), XLIII ("wine jars", a type of amphora) and LXIX, ("kraters" and jugs) (Frankfort and Pendelbury 1933: 110-113). Since these types, according to their description, have much higher instances of Blue Painted decoration than the general assemblage, their presence can be used as a possible indication. Out of 42 houses in the Main City for which pottery types are listed, 18 (c. 43%) include those types and five (c. 12%) explicitly mention painted decoration, a percentage which is fully within the ranges found in some surveyed areas in recent investigations. It is intriguing that out of the five houses described by Pete and Woolley as "middle-class", four contain explicit mentions of painted pottery, including the only clear reference to blue paint. It is not clear, however, whether there is a true relationship between a specific social grouping and higher numbers of Blue Painted vessels or if the houses called "middle-class" contain significant amount of pottery but few more elaborate objects, orienting by necessity the discussion of the contents towards pottery vessels.

The Amarna Project also included research into the Main City, most importantly a pottery survey carried out by Rose and Nicholson in 1986-1987. On selected areas all the sherd material was collected from circles with a 4m diameter and the composition of each assemblage was recorded. Unless numerical information is offered elsewhere, on the basis of the graphs provided alone it is easier to divide these data into ranges, below 5%, 5%-10% and 10%-15%. This information on the distribution is presented on figure 6.13. Percentages close to or above 10% can be seen in Area 4, and probably they were also originally higher in Area 3, ancient pottery dumps to the west of the Clerks' houses and very similar. Perhaps due to better preservation in Area 4, the percentage of pottery decorated with blue paint is much higher there, as well as that of cream-slipped sherds whose numbers seem to be associated with those of Blue Painted ones and could originate from the undecorated lower bodies of painted vessels. Areas 10 and 10A have similar compositions to 3 and they are also ancient pottery dumps. The highest concentration of decorated pottery here seems to be related to the kind of pottery that was disposed of, since these areas

also display the highest percentages of closed forms in siltware, while other types of pottery, such as breadcones, are completely absent (Rose 1987a: 115- 119). Another interesting observation from that data is that there appears to be no relation between Blue Painted pottery and polychrome decoration on Marl pottery, another potential sign of ceramic elaboration. This is demonstrated by Area 13 (1987a: 121) where more than 70% of sherds are Marl clay (a uniquely high number in the survey) and some have painted decoration, but Blue Painted are only marginally present. Aside from areas in the Central City, the supply route to the Workmen's village was also surveyed, including site X2 which was defined by the reasearchers as a transit site between the two. No Blue Painted pottery was found in either, but this might also be related to the heavy weathering to which the exposed sherds were subjected (Rose 1987a: 123-124). This seems likely, given that Blue Painted pottery can be found both at the Main City and the Workmen's village, as well as in areas associated with the transportation and redistribution of goods, such as the Zir area.

Among the areas surveyed in the following year, Area 24 was a dumping area where pottery was mixed with other refuse and a high percentage of it was Blue Painted. It is also close to the dumps investigated in the previous year. Finally, Area 25 is a modern disturbance of the ancient street surface between two rows of the Clerks' Houses where preservation is better than usual and the relative proportions of Blue Painted pottery are the highest encountered so far: 14.8% of the sherds found were Blue Painted and a further 10.8% were cream-slipped. Here, as in Areas 10 and 10A breadcones were absent (Rose 1989b: 102-104). In all such cases, this is not just an instance of percentages of breadcones decreasing while actual numbers remain constant, but a complete absence. From the main research strip selected for that year's survey, Areas 26-43, Blue Painted pottery was consistently present but in very low numbers (see fig. 6.14). The 1986 survey data underwent cluster analysis, which showed that areas 5, 9, 8 and 14 were clustered and associated with the breadcone manufacturing process at the great Aten temple. This is interesting because one of the elements they have in common is the absence of Blue Painted pottery. At the same time, it has already been observed that at the areas where this is most frequent, the remains of breadcones are absent (Rose 1989b: 108-112). To this, we can add Hope's (1991) general information during the composition of his preliminary corpus of Blue

Painted pottery that it seems to have been generally more common in domestic than in official quarters.

In addition to surface survey, some areas of the Main City have also been excavated more recently, some (relatively isolated) examples of which are described in the Reports. In 1985, House P46.33 was completely excavated, a modest residence from the city offering another opportunity to study the distribution of pottery in a domestic context. Unfortunately, the full contents had not been published at the time of writing, but only a report on the reasonably complete vessels, which nonetheless offer the opportunity to relate those with the information from *The City of Akhenaten* and the domestic contexts from the Workmen's Village (Rose 1995: 137-140; Bomann 1995: 10-29). An interesting remark made by Bomann (1995: 14) in relation to the architectural form of the house is that although it is modest it uses the social gestures of the richer part of society, which is possibly something to think about in combination with the objects used by its inhabitants as well, which, as in the Workmen's Village, include the occasional more elaborate pottery vessel, such as a bowl that was decorated, beyond the usual lotus motifs, with a blue duck and a red insect on the inside.

Not a lot of published information exists on burials at Amarna, but there is enough to suppose that Blue Painted pottery is consistently present in the burial goods. This is definitely true even at the highest levels of society, as shown by the excavation of tombs 28 and 29. Tomb 29 is very large and a stamped amphora handle associates it with Neferneferure, daughter of Akhenaten (El Khouly and Martin 1985: 16). The preliminary pottery report from tomb 28 discusses sherds from a large thick-walled closed vessel, as well as a fineware vase decorated with blue paint. Tomb 29 contained the most pottery, which included sherds from a Blue Painted biconical jar, and another jar which had the unusual feature of combining the decoration with a matte red background. The same types of pottery, including several Blue Painted pieces from jars, were found on the bed of the wadi where the tombs are located, a deposit which originated from disturbed tomb contents. Fineware storage vessels therefore, including those with painted decoration, seem to have been a consistent part of tomb furnishings, since they were present at all tombs, even when the contents were disturbed (Rose 1985: 18-30).

Saqqara

One of the things that this area offers in abundance are a series of elite burials, some of them recently published, which can be used to shed light on the presence of Blue Painted pottery in a funerary context. Since nearby Memphis was a major centre of pottery production as well as possible royal residence, these form an important part of the picture. Most publications look at the material from the perspective of chronology, which means that the issues of quantities and distribution often require some methodological tweaking. One of the 18th Dynasty examples is the tomb of Maya, an overseer of the treasury. More than 100 Blue Painted pots were recovered from the grave according to a preliminary report, some of them made in original shapes including the depiction of lotus petals in relief, vessels in the shape of bouquets and the combination of globular funnel-necked jars with pedestal bases (Aston and Aston 1991). Most of the fill was disturbed and of mixed date, but the New Kingdom material was found clustered in distinct concentrations. In the tomb shaft from the Central Chapel, Blue Painted storage jars in Nile Silt fabrics were found. In the outer court, a primarily cultic assemblage, no Blue Painted pottery was found at all. The composition of the pottery from the South Chapel (an open deposit) was very similar to that of the Central Chapel, although containing less Blue Painted pottery (Aston 1987).

Only slightly later is the tomb of Horemheb, commander-in-chief of Tutankhamun and later pharaoh, which has been excavated from 1975 to 1983, the pottery published in 2005 by Bourriau. Pottery from the original burials in the tomb remained in shafts I and IV as well as III, which probably also came originally from shaft IV. In addition, the tomb contained burials of varying dates (Bourriau *et al*. 2005: 1-2). The Blue Painted pottery is mostly decorated with floral motifs, but also includes more rare examples such as a riverine scene. Apart from complete vessels, hundreds of Blue Painted sherds on Nile Silt B2 fabrics were found, also combining multiple more elaborate examples with complex representational scenes or moulded and applied elements, indicating a high investment in ceramic complexity (see fig. 6.15). A 19th Dynasty cache of pottery used by embalmers was also found, which included Blue Painted funnel-necked storage vessels whose neck had been broken off, re-used as part of their equipment — in fact some of the most elaborate Blue Painted

examples found in the tomb (Bourriau *et al*. 2005: 41-55). This demonstrates that not only was there mobility during the life-cycle of these vessels, but additionally that no particular reverence prohibited their reuse in various ways.

The overall quantity or percentage of Blue Painted pottery in the tomb is not available, but a corpus of types is provided, as well as detailed information on all the pottery present in Shafts III and IV (see Table 6.5). These show that, although Blue Painted pottery is overrepresented in the corpus (24% of types are Blue Painted), it is still found in high numbers in the tomb (8% in Shafts III and IV combined), and there are specific contexts, such as Room F in Shaft IV where the percentage of Blue Painted pottery is at the same levels as in the corpus of types (see Table 6.6). In addition to the Blue Painted pottery, this room, which dates to the reign of Horemheb, contained vessels for unguents and polychrome wine jars as well as other kinds of decoration. This assemblage is considered complimentary to that in Room P, and this is definitely borne out by the data of decoration, since Room P contained only one Blue Painted vessel and no other decorated examples.

Overall, the amount of Blue Painted pottery that is found in a grave can clearly vary, depending on a variety of different factors. The study of a range of graves from different periods indicates that the use of Blue Painted pottery in an elite funerary context is a function more of the period of deposition and the prevailing material culture at that time and place, rather than reflecting the relative wealth and status of the occupant of the grave. We can perhaps conclude that the presence of Blue Painted pottery is not particularly significant — it is merely present in death, as it was in life, as a component of the tomb equipment. The later tombs I will now examine demonstrate a change in quantity.

An elite tomb from Saqqara poor in Blue Painted pottery is that of Iurudef, another high-ranking official of the 19th Dynasty. Despite the fact that the tomb, as many others, had been plundered, the overwhelming difference in the frequency of Blue Painted sherds compared to other tombs of the region seems to reflect a real difference: out of 75 vessels associated with the 19th Dynasty burial, only one, a bottle, is catalogued as Blue Painted. Complicating the attribution of causes to the different quantities of Blue Painted pottery is the fact that this assemblage is not only

later, but also of a different character than others presented here, being a pure funerary assemblage rather than one associated with funerary cult (Aston 1991: 47-54). As the examination of the following tomb will show, however, an assemblage used in funerary rituals is not necessarily one that includes high numbers of decorated vessels.

Somewhere in between Horemheb and Iurudef in date, as well as quantity of Blue Painted pottery, are the tomb-chapels of Paser and Ra'ia. Overall, no more than 30 Blue Painted vessels (calculated on the basis of sherds), almost all of them closed, were found on the surface and during the excavation of the contexts. Out of a total of 353 vessels uncovered in the excavation (an estimate has been possible since the corpus of types includes the number of examples found of each type), 16 were Blue Painted, making them around 5% of the assemblage (see Table 6.7). The decoration on most of these is limited to bands, with some floral examples and occasional use of plastic attachments, a combination which makes the assemblage intermediate, in relation to those discussed above, in elaboration as well as well as quantity. Generally, the range of shapes, where these can be recognised, is the same as in other tombs (Bourriau and Aston 1985: 36-37; 47-51). The distribution of the vessels in the tomb and the chapels also associates them with some deposits more than others: only three out of 150 vessels (c.2%) was Blue Painted in deposits used in funerary rituals, while the largest concentration came from the courtyard (four out of 70 vessels, c. 6%). These vessels are mostly closed shapes, small or medium in size and made out of silt, a combination of characteristics which suggests an association with the presentation of commodities, a function which could correlate with a stronger presence of decoration, enhancing the act of presentation by attracting and holding attention at the same time as creating an appropriate setting.

Qantir

The last regional focus is Qantir/Per-Ramesses in the eastern Nile Delta. The site was excavated by Bietak from 1966-1969, along with earlier Tell el-Daba, and again from 1975, more systematically, until the present day, while the pottery has been studied by Aston (1998: 1). Tell el-Daba itself still has an early 18th Dynasty presence which includes no Blue Painted pottery, confirming the dating of the beginning of the style (Fuscaldo 2000; 2001). There is as yet no full publication of either Qantir or its pottery, but enough information has been presented to give us an idea of the situation.

This is very important because Qantir is in a unique position to offer a fresh perspective for two different reasons: it is the only major Blue Painted production centre in the Delta, a region which should not be neglected, and it also offers the biggest and most well-researched pottery corpus in the Ramesside period.

The area QI is presumed to be the site of the 19th and 20th Dynasty palace area, excavated by Eggebrecht and Pusch in 1982-1987. The stratigraphic sequence starts from the Second Intemediate Period, with a hiatus between the early and the late 18th Dynasty and the area was probably resettled around the time of Horemheb. From that period, the excavated area contains a bronze-melting complex (QI B/3) and workshops, while during the time of Ramesses II (B/2b) it was the focus of activities connected with chariotry. It was finally destroyed between the period of Ramesses III and the end of the 21st Dynasty (Aston 1998: 2-4; Aston 1989). A large variety of forms decorated with blue paint have been found at the site (Aston 1998: 354). These include trays, plates, dishes, bowls, some maybe stemmed, beakers, lids, bottles and a variety of jars — a range that is more or less familiar from Memphis. In the absence of quantities, it is difficult to draw direct comparisons, but the description of the assemblage gives the general impression of greater variety and not the overwhelming dominance of jars that characterizes contemporary strata at Memphis. Qantir being more of an active centre of power in this period, is maybe reasonable to assume a fuller range of functions, and therefore a greater range of pottery. Blue Painted pottery is relatively common in the 19th Dynasty Qantir, as in other sites, (a statement unfortunately once again not quantified), but the painted motifs are usually limited to plain bands. Unlike most sites, the most typical fabric is not Nile B2, which would have to be imported from upper Egypt, but the local, more gritty and easily flaking Nile E (Aston 1989).

One of the very distinctive Blue Painted pottery groups particularly associated with Qantir are funnel-necked jars (see fig. 6.16 and 6.17) decorated with parallel vertical flutings down the front of the body, which is clearly divided into “front” and “back” sides. The blue paint is applied especially thickly and it is used almost exclusively in combination with white slip as a surface treatment. Additionally, applied grapes can be added to the rim, potentially associated with the vine-growing tradition in the Delta (Guasch Jané 2008). Whether the reason for this distinctive form

is a difference in dating or in regional traditions is an open question (Aston 1998: 355; 414). In addition to the occasional modelling of faces, other attachments can also be found in the forms of ducks, cows and cobras (Aston 1998: 398-402).

Area QI specifically, identified as the royal horse stud, has been examined in greater detail. It contains six stable complexes and it was built by the time of Sethnakhte and further used or enlarged by Ramesses III. It also included at least one residential part, acting as an attendant groom's house. A unique type of vessel, new to Qantir, conventionally named "fish vessel", was also decorated in blue paint and has no parallels anywhere else. Combined with the development of Blue Painted fluted vessels, this confirms that in the 19th Dynasty Delta innovations were still being introduced to the manufacture of Blue Painted pottery, cautioning against a disproportionate focus on the Amarna period and the dismissal of later phases. The "gaffir's hut", perhaps part of a palace structure in sector QIV, and dating from Seti II to Tauseret, was also excavated and the resulting pottery corpus was very similar to the one associated generally with the site. It included Blue Painted pottery, a lot of which awaited study at the time of writing, suggesting that a degree of similarity can be expected across Qantir in this regard (Pusch and Aston 1999: 39-51).

Towards interpreting Blue Painted pottery: material connections

Blue Painted pottery exists at the material intersection of several spheres of Egyptian life, many of which manifested in its appearance. It is generally agreed that the rows of flowers and petals, which are so common a motif, were probably inspired by actual garlands of flowers which were placed around vessels on special occasions (Hope 2001: 26). The evidence for the association with garlands is very strong, since some of the vessels also represent elements of the structure of the garland, such as the backing strips to which the petals were attached (Hope 1982: 77). There is actually a double association, both to the physical garlands and their depictions in painting on other media on the walls of tombs and houses, a connection first observed in the *City of Akhenaten* publications. The colour blue is also a potentially significant choice. Its rarity has already been mentioned, as well as the complexity of the production of cobalt pigment. Beyond that, blue is a significant colour category in ancient Egyptian art, although absent as a term from the language (the word for lapis lazuli, *hsbd*, could

refer to the colour blue in the absence of the determinant for "stone", according to Shortland (2012: 141)). It is, even when produced by frit, the most prestigious colour used in paint, and it is particularly common in the 18th and 19th Dynasties, when it can be used symbolically to indicate the water, the air, or the sky (Baines 1985). In an 18th Dynasty culture that is considered particularly colourful, cobalt blue is the most common shade of blue on objects associated with Amenhotep III through inscriptions. Kozloff (1997:178-185) who carried out this study, presents this using a vocabulary of personal preference which is problematic, but the association remains and it is very likely that it could add to the high status associations of the colour (Budka 2013: 205), as well as be related to the increase of the popularity of Blue Painted pottery in the same period and beyond.

The same pigment is used for the colouring of faience and glass, whose production begins in the 18th dynasty. These materials were also connected by their locations of manufacture, all of which have also shown evidence for Blue Painted pottery production, such as Malkata, Amarna and Qantir, indicating how restricted the use of the colouring material was. It has been suggested, at least for faience and glass, that these industries could physically cluster together around the production of cobalt blue, perhaps under direct state control (Nicholson and Henderson 2000: 204). If this is true, then there could either be a connection with the manufacture of cobalt-painted pottery, or a distribution channel for the movement of the pigment into other centrally-controlled workshops. There are, however, limits to the association: both faience and glass are often considered artificial forms of lapis lazuli (Shortland 2012: 140-145), and occasionally the word for lapis is used to mean faience. The roots of these words indicate the properties of "shining", "gleaming" or "dazzling", while on Blue Painted pottery no attempt is made to create that effect. This could further increase the status of the colour used and contribute to the rise of its popularity and its acceptance by the elite, but the direct association is with precious stones, and it does not seem to transfer to ceramics (Aufrère 1991: 464-465; Nicholson and Henderson 2000: 195, 204-205; Nicholson and Peltenburg 2000: 177-178, 182-184).

There is also the putative case for interaction with other materials. Yet the material of pottery itself remains central to this style of decoration. The shapes of Blue Painted pottery are clay-derived, the processes of its production fully integrated

in the usual potting sequence, and the surface treatments, such as slipping, are mostly those of other styles of pottery, with the blue paint added on top of that. The style also emerges primarily out of ceramic interactions, and its closest relatives are, if not ceramic, then at least plastic, in the cases of faience and glass. Additionally, there seems to be no particular association of the colour blue with silver, as indicated by the work of Baines with colours. The most likely exceptions, which more directly resemble metallic properties, are the 19th Dynasty fluted jars (Raue *et al*. 2007: 21).

It is interesting then that this potential influence from metal vessels does not appear at the beginning of the type but after a long time, once familiarity had developed, allowing more conceptual flexibility in the manipulation of the material. What came first was is the decision to embellish pottery, rather than make it look like something else. One last observation is that when Egyptians finally did start to decorate pottery in greater quantities and with greater consistency, they did so not by copying one of the decorated styles that already existed in other regions but in a way that seems very Egyptian. The combination of the light blue, a dominant colour in the New Kingdom, with the flower of the lotus, a heavily used motif, references a familiar Egyptian vocabulary, if perhaps one now used to express new practices and ideas. The end of Blue Painted pottery on the other hand is probably not to be attributed to the limited availability of materials (Aston 1998: 57-58), since all types of decorated pottery become rarer during the 20th Dynasty (the end of which pushes against the limits of this project), and perhaps has more to do with social changes and specifically the changes in the practices and the ways of life of which Blue Painted pottery was a part.

Towards interpreting Blue Painted pottery: social connections

The issue of the role and value of Blue Painted vessels is related to multiple factors, and it is difficult to be unaffected by how much these objects stand out to us today. However, there are some objective indications of higher value (Hope 2001: 50). Their rare pigment ingredient, production process, and occasionally very complex shapes, all severely limited availability. The overall distribution in the cases where we have more information than presence or absence corroborates this. Its

limited distribution shows that not only was its production restricted to royal workshops, but also its consumption remained for the most part close to the same centres, perhaps moving within those into wider social circles through barter (Hope 1989: 17).

The process of the formation of a divide between the lives of the elite and the majority of the population includes, according to Baines (2007: 291), an effect of impoverishment and standardization in the non-royal domain. A lot of the Egyptian pottery offers a very convincing argument in this direction, as a material that was embedded in the daily life of everyone, therefore uniform and underprivileged, while more aesthetically rich objects were valued by the elite. Most elements of Egyptian material culture recognised now as art were available only to the elite and executed by a professional and specialised group. It is not certain if most of society shared the same values, but if they did then the majority of the non-elite population must have had a strong sense of their deprivation, with the elite controlling both the material and the symbolic resources. Blue Painted pottery, placed in this context, becomes particularly interesting, with its opposition to the norm of uniform and mass-produced ceramic containers and its ambiguity regarding availability and value (Baines 2007: 299-305; Baines and Yoffee 1998: 234-239).

Keeping these observations in mind, I will turn now to the period when Blue Painted pottery's quantities begun increasing, following initial experimentations. The reign of Amenhotep III produced an exceptional number of works of architecture and representational art with royal associations. Next to those, there was also a non-royal interest in the same, as well as in the production and acquisition of elaborate decorated items. The same trend continued during the reign of Akhenaten, both periods of cultural and political tensions preoccupied with the consolidation and projection of pharaonic and elite power. Most of the resulting works of art were only available to the small audience that could visit the temple or participate in ceremonies that took place in the capital (Baines 2007: 315-330). Many of the reforms instigated by kings in this period concerned the "high culture" of the elite, but no area of material culture remained unaffected and many reached a peak of quantity and complexity, while new designs and forms appeared almost in every medium (Baines 1998: 301-307; Kozloff 1998: 95-110; Kozloff *et al*. 1992: 395-397).

It is very difficult to look at this explosion of design and richness that appears in the objects involved in so many areas of life and not think of the contemporary appearance of Blue Painted pottery. In discussing the context of the development of Blue Painted pottery, I suggested that the establishment and stabilisation of the 18th Dynasty, in association with the pre-existing conditions, was important for drafting pottery into the elite world. Now, this is combined with the broader cultural world of this period. It seems very likely, in the context of these developments, that not only many aspects of elite culture were changed, but new types of objects were brought into the elite culture sphere as well, such as pottery through the addition of (initially) elaborate designs and pigments difficult to obtain and produce. In relation to that, it is interesting that in early contexts, as in 18th Dynasty Memphis, the appearance of Blue Painted is associated with a more general investment in tableware and presumably the consumption activities that tableware were implicated in. This observation needs also to be nuanced, taking into account the peak in quantity of Blue Painted pottery in 19th Dynasty contexts in Kom Rabia, Memphis, and the contemporary decrease in its presence in the Saqqara tombs. These trends are not actually contradictory, because of the complex relationships between the material available in life and what is considered suitable for use in different contexts, such as funerary ones: if, at this point, the more-simply decorated Blue Painted pottery drifts more into everyday life, perhaps its association with the elite and its desirability for that sector of society, as well as the investment in it, decreases.

I will end this part with an examination of one aspect of the richness of New Kingdom life that pottery, and especially Blue Painted pottery contributed to, namely banqueting, and a more generalised association with stimulation of the senses. We know on the basis of written and pictorial sources, such as the description of the preparation of feasts in Deir el-Medina and real or ideal depictions (Hodel-Hoenes 2000: 34-36; 72; 186-189), that banquets were a part of this life, particularly in an elite setting (Meskell 2002: 152; 173). Pottery vessels decorated with flower garlands are also part of the settings, for example as they are depicted in the paintings of the tomb of Nebamun (see fig. 6.18) or the houses at Amarna (see fig. 6.19). The flowers of the blue lotus, either real or painted ones (and the most common motif of vessels) have many associations. It is has been suggested, primarily on the basis of their potential properties and iconographic associations with other substances (Emboden

1981), that they were used for their narcotic properties, perhaps mixed in wine, the same wine that was stored, served and consumed in Blue Painted pottery. Admittedly, this interpretation still leaves gaps, lacking secure archaeobotanical or analytical support for this kind of consumption (Collard 2011: 79-80). More securely, the flowers were symbolically charged, their flowering cycle associating them with ideas of resurrection and rebirth.

All these elements together created a setting delivering sensations and images, including the Blue Painted containers, along with other elements like music, dancing and the smells of flowers and incense. Feasts could be private or involve the whole community at festivals for special, formal occasions, at fixed points in time, used to reinforce an impression of continuity and strengthen the existential order (Meskell 2002: 175-177). So perhaps the painted vessels, in a period of desire for colour and richness, were particularly welcome, not just as a part of this life but also as a way to freeze the banquet in time and retain the impression of the feast, projecting the ideal of this kind of luxurious lifestyle even when used and present in everyday life, possibly many of them by people who might have had only rarely, if at all, access to those kinds of events. And indeed the idea of the day-to-day (i.e. eternal) feast is one that exists in New Kingdom Egypt and is manifested for example in the wall paintings for Aten (Budka 2013: 203-204). The way the vessels are incorporated in this setting and make references to it is especially interesting: some of them are those that can be used for consumption, such as the bowls we have occasionally encountered, but most, as we have seen where sufficient information on shape was available, are actually part of the setting, the "spread" of decorated objects that situates and defines the activity in time and space and then distributes its presence throughout life.

Conclusions

To summarise briefly, Blue Painted pottery covers a very wide variety of vessels with many possible functions. This wide spectrum of shapes is echoed in a wide variety of social contexts, which, at first, seems as if it might offer a wider segment of the population access to aesthetically enriched materials. If this is true, in combination with the observations of Baines it could indicate a widening of the resources that were

available as a part of the negotiation of social status. How does this idea however correspond with the archaeological picture?

What we do see is a concentration of production near major centres, especially those with royal associations. Within those centres however, the image changes, and Blue Painted pottery seems to be very widely distributed, sometimes, as in pottery dumps in Amarna, reaching more than 10% of the pottery assemblage. Despite the occasional scarcity of the evidence it is clear that in the sites where it is present it can be found in many different contexts: in the residences of different levels of society, in tombs from those of the pharaohs to the workmens' at Deir el-Medina, in sanctuaries (although it seems that the association with these is weaker, when the numbers are compared to those in other parts of the same site) and in areas associated with the transfer and storage of goods. I have already suggested that the decoration of pottery is a part of an ideal way of life that becomes incorporated in objects of everyday life.

Does this mean therefore that in the New Kingdom this creates a breakdown in the division between the elite and the non-elite, with the malleable medium of pottery bridging the gap? One theme that often resurfaces is the aesthetic deprivation of large segments of society (Wengrow 2001). Looking back at the pattern for Blue Painted pottery, despite the suggestions of wider access, this suggestion still stands. A richer life of the senses that often appears as an ideal in the New Kingdom, especially the 18th Dynasty, is very seductive, and Blue Painted pottery can pull us right into it — as perhaps it is meant to do. But ultimately, access to this expression is still only open to non-elite segments of society to the degree that they were in contact with elite power, as indicated by the consistency of its presence in dependent areas such as a variety of workmen's villages (Amarna, Site J, Abou el-Goud). This shows that maybe there is an inclusion of more diverse and less exclusive materials into the elite circle, but the possibilities for other people to use and manipulate these was still limited and controlled.

Chapter 7. Cyprus: a case study in idiosyncrasy and convergence

Introduction

The island of Cyprus (see fig. 7.1) and its pottery production have already been the subject of study in the course of this project from two different perspectives. I have previously drawn a rough outline of the historical and social changes that take place in the Second Millennium BC, and I have also taken a broad view of the pottery alongside other traditions in the Mediterranean, where I tried to show its dominant features and identify how it differs from the assemblages in other Mediterranean regions. As a part of that, the main changes were identified. Regionalism and its relation to pottery styles, the place of pottery in trade, the modes of production and the way they change through time were dominant, and they still form the basic axes of this chapter. Having this basis, it is now time to move deeper and study both these phenomena, and the Cypriot sequence itself, as much as possible through the composition of deposits in context and site assemblages. In the following section, I explain in detail how I set out to do this.

An explicit comparison with the other areas under study, following the contextual analysis carried out for Egypt and the Aegean, serves to highlight the features of Cypriot societies. In Egypt, I have already studied a society where central control was an important factor, which can be seen to limit the distribution of decorated pottery and on Crete a different configuration, where decorated pottery has a much stronger presence and the potential to become a flexible tool for social negotiation. There is a large difference of scale between the two, but central institutions with a supporting administrative structure are identifiable in both. A very important difference, which attracted attention from the beginning, is that Cyprus seems to be on a very different, non-palatial trajectory, which makes it an ideal third pole of comparison. This factor does not diminish the differences between Egypt and Crete, but it identifies an element of distinction for Cyprus, the ramifications of which we can seek in material culture. The timespan covered here starts from the beginning of the Middle Cypriot period, and reaches roughly the Late Cypriot IIC, after which a new host of issues arises, which are very interesting but would stretch this chapter too far and in too many directions.

Not only are the social developments on Cyprus different, but the pottery being produced there has unique characteristics as well: remaining handmade rather than wheel-thrown until later than any of the surrounding societies, an object of trade in itself (a practice shared with the Aegean, but with different features) as well as acting as a container, with an emphasis on regional differentiation and a very intriguing trajectory towards what appears to be a more intense and standardized production, Cyprus throws into relief many of the issues we have flagged up in Chapter 4, and offers the opportunity to examine whether these unique pottery characteristics are associated with an equally unique social structure.

Using deposits or assemblages as the primary source of information allows us to formulate the general themes that have been observed in the pottery studies of Cyprus into specific research questions. The most basic of these is how to collect and approach the material from a methodological point of view, which is the first that will be addressed. Following that, I examine the data in chronological order, trying to assess how much of the pottery is decorated, and whenever possible, how complex the decoration is. The variety of contexts from which this information comes, permits connections between the data and further questions. Additionally, if there are differences between these kinds of contexts, how do these relate to the way one's place in society is negotiated in Cyprus? As the changes in Cypriot society become more visible, what are the accompanying shifts in pottery, especially in sites which become very important later on, and can be considered hatching grounds of social changes, such as Enkomi, or those associated with production, such as Toumba tou Skourou, and what are the implications of the data from pottery decoration for the structure of Cypriot society?

This kind of connection with the ceramic data led to dividing the chapter in a chronological order, but occasionally grouping phases according to their characteristics, instead of the broader periods to which they belong. Due to that, I have treated the beginning of MC as a unit, its end and the beginning of LCI form a different one, while the final LCI and LCII are the last periods which will be studied. By adopting this division into sections I do not mean to suggest an overall chronological scheme for Cyprus, but rather to group the established phases according to shared questions, taking into account continuing processes, particularly those that connect the MC and LC. Finally, I will synthesize the conclusions suggested by the

answers to these questions, and make some initial connections with the conclusions reached in other areas to form a bigger picture.

Methodology

In this section I will set out the most general aspects of my approach to the material and the basic groundwork, explaining the choices more closely related to specific publications as they arise. The overall categorization framework initially developed through, and tested in work in, the Stratigraphic Museum in Knossos has been used in Cyprus, covering both surface treatments and general shape categories. Even when the level of detail provided did not allow me to reach a count of decoration complexity, the general decoration categories (such as Painted Geometric, or Relief/Incised) were still used, and the awareness of the variation in decoration complexity proved to be useful conceptually. In terms of quantification, primary deposits containing complete or restorable vessels are rare in Cyprus, with the exception of tomb material, so sherd counts is the measure most publications provide.

The general approach used in Cyprus is broadly the same as the one followed before. Full publications offering statistical data on pottery were the preferred source of information, followed by those offering rough numerical data and catalogues of tombs and settlement deposits. In the absence of this, general remarks were utilised to gain at least an impression of the information. The diversity of settlement types excavated and published gives me the opportunity to discuss some relevant, and very encouraging, characteristics of the Cypriot archaeological literature, especially regarding site publication, which make it a good ground for pottery studies at this point. Many areas that have until recently been underrepresented are now rapidly improving. Publications of settlements, such as Marki-*Alonia* and others, are beginning to address the gap between funerary and settlement information on the island, and research in new, previously neglected, geographical areas, in addition to a flourishing of survey (see Knapp 1997: 33-44) is covering more of the landscape. This gives me the chance to incorporate both mortuary and domestic data and compare them to one another, as well as avoid over-reliance on the characteristics of a single area, which could be a problem, since local sequences are known to be diverse in Cyprus until well into LC. The surveys have generated much data on landscape use,

but less of the kind of quantitative information on ceramics that is necessary for this kind of analysis — they are however still works in progress to be aware of in the future. One of the largest limitations, the awareness of which is impossible to avoid, is the bisection of the island after 1974, the termination of projects and the large-scale loss of material suffered by many excavations.

The quality of publication itself is often excellent, providing much needed statistical information. Much of the work in Cyprus happens in the contexts of larger projects, which target wider areas than a single site. This not only gives a fuller impression of habitation, but also leads to good publication practices, with regular updates being produced by many of these projects, a source of information used often in this study. An additional source are the Reports of the Department of Antiquities, which are regularly published in English and supply information, often including quantified data, on current or recent research. Finally, it is also positive that there is movement towards a consensus in terminology where, if all researchers are not using the same terms, at least there is a general understanding of what each is referring to.

On this subject of ceramic terminology, I need to make two final, but crucial points of methodology. Firstly, I have already described, in the ceramic overview chapter, the historical background of the terms for Cypriot wares and how they came to be so complex. I have chosen to use the terms defined by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition and Åström (1972a; 1972b), as adapted by Frankel and Webb for MC (Frankel and Webb 1996; 2006) and Crewe for LC (Crewe 2007). I use these when referring to characteristics of Cypriot wares, in addition to the surface treatment and decoration categories I mentioned above for comparative purposes, whenever possible. Secondly, the complicated ware system used in Cyprus, rather than a hindrance, turned out to be a blessing in disguise. In cases where rates of decorated pottery were not provided by the author of a study, especially in older publications, but the relative percentages of different wares were given, it was possible in some cases, thanks to the very specific subdivisions of wares, knowing that some of them are always decorated, and some never, to calculate at least a minimum percentage of decorated pottery in the assemblage, and in some cases even estimate the likelihood of complexity. In cases where the actual information was not provided, this method was often used to arrive at least at a rough estimate of decoration, sometimes used in comparison with catalogues from similar contexts.

MC I and II: The data

A good starting point for the study of the early MC is a settlement that has been investigated since the 1920s and was for a long time one of the few sources of information on settlement archaeology in the MC. This makes the material culture of Alambra-*Mouttes* especially important. The site sits between the sedimentary lowlands, having access to productive agricultural land, as well as the igneous geology of Troodos (Coleman *et al.* 1996: 1-10). Most of the up-to-date information on it comes from the study of material excavated by the Cornell project in 1976-1982. The area of habitation is estimated at a minimum of 6 hectares and a maximum of 15, a number which sounds large, but it has to be taken into account that houses tended to be occupied for a single period, and they were not constructed on top of one another, thereby creating a dispersed pattern (Coleman *et al.* 1996: 17-18). The information I used comes from the excavation of Area A.

More than 99% of the pottery is variations on Red Polished (RP) ware according to shape, decoration and fabric. Incision is the most common type of decoration, sometimes combined with plastic elements, and the motifs used are exclusively geometric. Two local subdivisions of the RP fabrics have been identified, designated as A and B (Barlow 1996: 248-253; Barlow and Vaughan 1993), which are also associated with different degrees of coarseness, function, and types of decoration. RPA is calcareous and carries the more elaborate decoration, often filled incisions, while RPB is produced from igneous clays, or a mixture of igneous and calcareous, and is more simply decorated, usually with incision or small plastic additions. This fabric is usually harder, coarser, and used on what the analysis describes as utilitarian vessels. These two variations are used at the same time and contexts, complementing each other.

Full statistical information is provided on the basis of wares, but not decoration. It is possible however, from the combination of this with the catalogue, and based on the composition of fully listed room deposits to arrive at some likely estimates, showing at least a minimum level of decoration, despite the majority of the assemblage belonging to the same ware. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 show the ceramic contents of Buildings I and II by ware, in minimum estimated numbers of vessels, which were the measure used by the publication (Barlow 1996: 268-304; adapted from Figures 98-111). Tables 7.3 and 7.4 show the contents of rooms 13 and 8 from Building IV

(see fig. 7.2) which were of particular interest: Room 13 (see fig. 7.3) had unusual ceramic contents, while Room 8 (see figs. 7.4 and 7.5) was the largest in the site, containing more and better preserved pottery than any other. Since some of the contents of these rooms are individually catalogued, it is possible to break them down by decoration category in addition to ware (Tables 7.5 and 7.6, Charts 7.1 and 7.2). Finally, using the percentages of RP, and whether it is decorated in a simple or complex way as a guide, it is possible to produce an estimate of the decoration of pottery in larger assemblages, such as all of Buildings I and II (Table 7.7, Chart 7.3). Unfortunately, the number of mostly complete vessels, which were the ones recorded in the catalogue, was small (which is the reason percentages were judged unnecessary) but as well-preserved and self-contained deposits, they permit us to at least gain an idea of the ratios of different treatments. Given that the nature of this context might be special, it is not wise to generalise to the overall assemblage, so only the lowest numbers for decoration have been used here, and they should only be considered as a rough indications. With this caveat, we can see that all of the RPA vessels are decorated, in at least half of the cases with complex incision, and at least 40% of the RPB. This brings us to a likely estimate of 46.3% of the pottery being decorated, with 5.7% or more of that decoration being complex.

Marki-*Alonia* is another very important early settlement, excavated by the Australian Cyprus Expedition since 1990. It is similar to Alambra-*Mouttes* in its situation between a sedimentary plain that is suitable for agriculture and the igneous zone, as well as in the dispersed occupation, which spreads over 5-6 hectares. The ceramic data have been excellently analysed in two publications by Frankel and Webb (1996; 2006), providing data which are especially concerned with settlement-wide trends, recording information at the level of the site assemblage per phase, which by 2006 totalled 206,996 sherds and other ceramic artefacts, of which 9662 are diagnostics. Information that was additionally recorded was the association of decoration with specific fabrics, degrees of coarseness and shapes. It is especially relevant to note that in this case percentages of decorative treatments were included in the publications, and that the definition of decoration used by the researchers is essentially the same as for this project: any distinct modification to the surface (other than general surface treatment, deliberate colour variation or burnishing) by incision, applied relief or impression (Frankel and Webb 1996: 116).

Occupation on the site dates from the beginning of EC, but the phases of interest to us are G-I, representing MCI and II (see fig. 7.6). These are the final and, fortunately, best preserved periods of use, containing most of the well-preserved and complete vessels (Frankel and Webb 2006: 89-105). The vast majority of the pottery found in them is RP, in terms of wares. A brief overview of previous phases shows that the percentage of decoration and its complexity steadily increases from the foundation until the end of the life of the site (2006: 148). The percentage of decoration in the total site assemblage over time, its kinds and its association with particular fabrics can be seen in Tables 7.8-7.10 (2006: Tables 4.23-4.25). No distinction was made between complex and simple decoration, aside from the comment of complexity in decoration increasing over time, which is in itself useful. From those tables we can see that 12% of the diagnostic pottery is decorated in MCI and 15% in MCII, that almost all of the pottery made in the finest fabric is decorated, and that "coarse" in *Alonia* refers mostly to cooking pots (see figs. 7.7 and 7.8). It is not clear why there is such a difference between the proportion of decorated vessels between *Alonia* and *Mouttes*, but it is notable that this difference persists in the study of unselected primary contexts, as I will show in the following paragraph and section. It is therefore not a feature of the way diagnostic pottery was selected but a likely characteristic of the assemblage itself. Furthermore, the pottery in the two sites was studied and published by the same team of researchers, ensuring minimal, if any, divergences in methodology.

To balance this more general picture, I have extracted data from the excavation database (which is provided in full in electronic form as part of the publication) of the composition of two deposits in context. XIII-5 (2006:44, see fig. 7.9) is an abandonment context associated with a floor in Phase G-1, with pottery found mostly on and beside a bench and close to a hearth, to which I have added the pottery found elsewhere in the same room (see Table 7.11 and Chart 7.4). LXVI-5 (2006: 54) is a fill found above a floor surface in the same phase, and it has been chosen because it provides a wide variety of complete or nearly complete artefacts (see Table 7.12 and Chart 7.5). These give decoration rates of 17% and 13.2% respectively, suggesting that the overall impression gained from diagnostic pottery is probably to be trusted. The agreement of the detailed data with those from the diagnostics can be considered a confirmation in two different ways: both because the

detailed context information is unselected and because it is independent of the diagnostics.

Finally, Kissonerga-*Skalia* in the Paphos district is being investigated by the Lemba Archaeological Project (Crewe *et al*. 2008) and is the first EC-MC settlement to be excavated in southwest Cyprus, as well as the only known coastal site from that period. The pottery is very different from what we have encountered so far. Fabrics are hard and very fine, and almost exclusively non-calcareous clay is used. Drab Polished is by far the most common ware, which is considered by the researchers to be a regional variation of RP. It is found in coarse and fine variations, which have the same composition and differ only in the size of the inclusions, and together they make up around 70% of the assemblage, with the finer fabric being more common. No quantities are supplied, but decoration is characterised as infrequent in the settlement, but more common in the associated cemetery, and mostly consisting of simple incision, with relief being used on larger, coarser vessels.

Mortuary data are a different source of information on the period, and for a long time had been the main one. Bellapais-*Vounous* was one of the early important sites, containing burials from EC and MC. There is very little usable information from Site A (Stewart and Stewart 1950). Some of Schaeffer's excavations on Site B (see fig. 7.10), however, were recently republished by Dunn-Vaturi (2003) on the basis of his documents, which permits a more detailed look into the information. It can be said generally about burials in Cyprus that the conditions of preservation are often very bad, and this is certainly true of *Vounous*. However, full tomb contents are often published, making them a good source of information, and additionally it is useful to have access to groups of pottery which were deliberately chosen and included in funerary assemblages, even when these are not always complete.

Vounous specifically suffered from water action and intrusive pits. In addition to that, tombs were used for multiple burials, making dating and attribution of artifacts difficult, especially when the stratigraphy is destroyed by flooding, as often happened. These limitations, in addition to the early date of the cemetery, mean that the burials that are well suited to pottery analysis are few. Here I have selected Tomb 54 (see fig. 7.11), which contained one of the largest numbers of preserved vessels (116) and dates to ECIII-MCI, and Tomb 59, whose contents seem to stand out (Dunn-Vaturi 2003:23-32; 59-61) and is also dated to MCI (see Tables 7.13 and 7.14 and Chart 7.6). Tomb 59 contained metal objects (a ring, pins, tweezers and a

scrapper), a spindle whorl, a whetstone and three paste beads in addition to a small number of ceramic vessels but with a high level of decorative elaboration (see fig. 7.12).

Cemeteries were also found in association with the settlement at Marki-*Alonia*, and contemporary with it, which makes them especially interesting, since they give the opportunity for direct comparison of the two assemblages (Sneddon 2002: 1-5; 14-23). The cemeteries of Marki are also of interest methodologically, since they were heavily looted, but they offer a good example of how information can be collected through survey, despite the destruction, and how spatial patterning can be used in order to make associations even after external factors have intervened. It is slightly problematic for our purposes that the conclusions presented concerned the whole period of use, including Philia, but it is still possible to draw some rough data. Given the quality of the information, it was decided by Sneddon that a broader approach was more productive, making the cemetery assemblage the main unit of analysis, mostly on the basis of diagnostic sherds, of which there are 1455, and represent 11.5% of the mortuary assemblage. Only 2.2% are Philia, 96.5% are RP and 20% of the total are decorated, which places them, according to the original analysis, in the range of other cemeteries such as Vounous B and early Lapithos, and similar to those encountered in the settlement at Marki. It is also possible, however, that the percentage of decorated pottery was initially higher, but it was especially targeted by looters (2002: 39-42). No distinction was recorded between different qualities of decoration, although it is acknowledged that this distinction would have been useful (2002: 103). The decoration techniques and the relationship between those and the fabric quality follows the same pattern as in the settlement of Marki (2002: 54-55).

The percentage of decorated pottery in MC tombs can also be seen in tombs from Kalavasos, which have been published as part of the Vasilikos Valley Project (Croft and Todd 1986:25-30; Cullen and Wheeler 1986: 128-155), and from rescue excavations in the form of a preliminary notice in the RDAC (Croft 1979) and conference proceedings (Hemsley 1993: 250-259). Information on quantities of decorated pottery is available at many resolutions. Hemsley provides data at the level of the cemetery. In tombs 57-79 at Kalavasos, out of 125 excavated vessels only 29 (23.2%) are not decorated, while the rest (76.8%) have relief/incised or impressed decoration. In the Panayia Church cemetery, 56.6% out of a total of 302 vessels are not decorated, while 43.3% have relief/incised decoration, while 2.6% of the whole

assemblage is described as complex incised. In the tombs of the Cinema Area only 55 vessels have been discovered, but the numbers are similar, with 58.2% of them not being decorated.

The cemeteries of Deneia give information on a different part of the island, following different practices, and known for its particularly distinctive incised pottery, which I will revisit in the following section. The localities *Kafkalla* and *Mali* were surveyed and selected tombs were investigated and published by Frankel and Webb (2007). The statistics concerning the contents of the tombs were provided in terms of wares. The tombs presented here are 764 and 772, which were in use in MCI-II. These are part of a tomb complex in *Kafkalla*, made up by several entrance shafts, constructed in a naturally interconnected system of underground caverns (2007: 32-34, see fig. 7.13). Unfortunately, while for some wares information was available on what percentage of the ware is decorated among the diagnostic sherds, this is not provided for all, so it is not possible to produce even estimates of overall percentage of decoration (2007: 38-85). The only estimate that could have been created is an absolute minimum of decoration, based on the wares which are decorated by definition, such as White Painted (WP), but given that RP makes up more than 50% of the pottery and is very often decorated, we would be missing such a big part of the decoration that the exercise would be meaningless (for the wares see Table 7.15). It is important to state that the rate of decoration would be expected to be very high, and its characteristics (see figs. 7.14-7.19) will be further discussed in the following section.

MC I and II: A simple time?

The discussion of regional differences in Cypriot pottery is a recurring theme, which makes it a good place to start any analysis. There is less ceramic diversity in early EC than later in the same period. Local differences in fabrics and appearance become more pronounced in early MC (although not dramatically, and EC and MC themselves remain similar (Swiny 1989: 16; Webb *et al.* 2010: 70-72; Frankel and Webb 2012). In late MCIII and early LCI, which is the subject of the next section, these regional divisions reached their high point. They were already present earlier,

however, as we have seen in the overview of the data from Deneia, Kissonerga-*Skalia* and Politiko-*Troullia*, especially expressed by different forms of polished wares (Red Polished, Black Polished or Drab Polished), differences in the motifs and elaboration of incised decoration and in the occurrence and prevalence of painted decoration, which is expressed by the complex of White Painted wares, which are more frequent in the east of the island (Åström 1972a: 11). These differences can be used as evidence to study contacts and interaction between different sites, and they mostly demonstrate that those were stronger between areas which were geographically closer to one another, while long-range contacts across the island were more limited (Swiny 1989: 17-18).

For the early MC, there are two trends which can be seen across many areas and settlements and are especially significant to the process and mode of pottery production. The first concerns the basic nature of production, which can be demonstrated to be of small scale through many different lines of evidence. One is the lack of standardisation in the final products, with small variations in shape, surface treatment and decoration ensuring that no two vessels are identical (Barlow 1996: 239). Whether this production took place at the household level is a bigger question. Frankel and Webb especially have long tried to answer this question (see Frankel 1988), and their latest approach (2006: 149-154) yields convincing results.

Based on the assemblage of Marki, the authors managed to calculate the rates of pottery discard and the need for replacement and combined this information with calculations on the likely number of households and their duration, creating an estimate of the ceramic demand per year per household. With the exception of special occasions (specifically the removal of larger amounts of pottery from circulation due to a death in the family and the subsequent burial) they arrive at a figure of six vessels per year, which is too low to justify the maintenance of the necessary skills needed for each separate household to create its own pottery. They propose therefore a model of "elementary specialisation", where the settlement's needs are mostly met by a small number of potting households, which produce and exchange ceramics part-time, with the caveat that, aside from the estimates created for demand, this kind of production is archaeologically indistinguishable from household production.

The second significant trend is the consistent use of different fabrics for the production of different shapes, with different function, and associated with the specific decoration characteristics. This has been observed at different (but not all, see

Kissonerga-*Skalia*) settlements of the same period (Barlow 1996: 248-256; Barlow and Vaughan 1993: 6-14; Frankel and Webb 2006: 148). In each site the composition of the clays was distinct, depending on local availability, but the practice of selecting different clays according to the intended function and appearance of the vessel was common. The implications of this are important. It means that pottery intended for elaborate decoration was created from clay that was differently selected, processed and fired: essentially, a separate production sequence from beginning to end. From this, it is not a major leap to wonder if it leads to a separate concept of elaborately decorated pottery on the part of the potter, and perhaps the consumer as well, and a special awareness of the category of decoration. This awareness would exist in the context of small-scale production, which leads to the conclusion that there is a possibility that parts of early Middle Bronze Age Cyprus combined a highly skilled and distinct idea of decoration with the use of pottery in a way that does not seem to emphasize a hierarchical relationship. These indications of the distinction of a more elaborate kind of pottery, which confirms its legitimacy as an identifiable, separate category, do not necessarily lead to a reading of the use of that pottery to establish and reinforce social distinctions and hierarchies between people, even if there is a hierarchy of quality or preference between pots. The potential does exist, but to test whether it is actually carried out we need to turn to the contexts of use, and, in time, to their comparison with contexts in other macro-regions of study. It is fortunate that we can also call upon primary contexts for this, such as Makri *Alonia*, or funerary, as in Deneia. Following from this, I will now study two different contexts of use for pottery with complex decoration.

Funerary assemblages are one possible avenue of examining social differences, if those were expressed through the goods placed with the dead. Whether there is a special character to those specifically in Cyprus is still an open question. At *Vounous*, Dunn-Vaturi identifies a distinctly funerary character in some of the ceramics, especially those that are composite, or zoomorphic and anthropomorphic (2003: 180). Variation in funerary assemblages can be seen in some sites in the number, kind and quality of funerary goods, including pottery, which could reflect social standing. This is complicated by other factors such as the choice of wares included, which could relate to a variety of affiliations, rather than social standing (Dunn-Vaturi 2003: 181-182), as well as external problems, such as looting, which is a common problem in Cyprus (Webb and Frankel 2009).

In other sites, such as Marki, it is not possible to see ranking in funerary assemblages based on the pottery alone, especially since no gradations were made in the quality of the decoration (Sneddon 2002: 100-104). In Kalavasos, Hemsley identifies a category of vessels which she designates as "delicate ornamental" (1993: 259) and separates them from the "durable everyday" category, but as the analysis of settlement deposits has shown, ceramics which would fit this designation can be found there as well, and it has been shown on the basis of pottery use-wear that most of the pottery placed in tombs was not specially produced for that purpose (Dugay 1996).

The data presented so far in this chapter do show differences between settlement and cemetery assemblages, and specifically a consistent tendency for decorated vessels to be selected for in mortuary contexts. This could be another indication of potential singling out of decorated pottery, as a category that was preferable for being placed in the tomb, and perhaps also for being used in the practices surrounding the burial. It would however be a stretch to move from that to drawing conclusions on the use of pottery to signal social differentiation. According to Swiny (1989: 26-27), in the north coast cemeteries, to which *Vounous* belongs, there is no substantial increase in ceramics in the richest tombs, and in fact there are hints that metal wealth and pottery quantities are inversely proportional. With this information in mind, it is intriguing that tomb 59, which was presented here due to the hints of richness it contained, such as beads and metal objects, contained very few ceramics, but 4 out of 11 vessels had complex incised decoration.

It is very difficult to see social stratification in the early MC settlement record: their sizes, architectural features and long-distance connections (or rather the lack thereof) offer no evidence for either an internal hierarchy, or one between sites (Swiny 1989:25). There are, however, some elements that are distinctive, and have interesting ceramic associations, such as Rooms 13 and 8 from Building IV in Alambra (Coleman *et al.* 1996: 75-89). Room 13 contains an unusually large number of juglets and bowls, which likely originally rested on a shelf, as well as the densest concentration of animal bones of any room in the site. Room 8 contained even more juglets and bowls, as well as a large hearth, and the most burnt animal bone fragments. Conversely, the proportion of coarse wares was low. The excavators argued that these two areas could have served more than one household, and been areas for communal gatherings, which the pottery and faunal remains suggest

involved the consumption of food and drink. The handles of the bowls indicate that they were used as drinking vessels. In Room 8 and the combined assemblage of both rooms there are as many bowls and there are juglets, suggesting individual drinking sets, as well as a few medium-sized bowls which could have functioned as serving vessels. Room 8 is also, at 45 square meters, the largest room in the settlement, making it especially suitable for large gatherings. Further support for the communal character of this space comes from the fact that such a large amount of pottery was found in it, despite the fact that the settlement was abandoned in a planned way and did not suffer a sudden destruction. This suggests that the contents of the room were possibly not removed because they were not thought of as private property (1996: 87).

If these are indeed locations for group gatherings, and there seems to be much evidence in favour of this interpretation, this makes pottery decoration in those rooms more significant, since they are a potential location for exhibition through the objects that were involved in the practices taking place there. In both of those there are very high rates of decoration, with 60.7% of the vessels in Room 13 and 46.7% in Room 13, both above the (estimated) average for Buildings I and II. In addition to that, complex decoration is also significantly higher than average, found on 13.3% of the vessels in Room 13. This predominance of decoration in a potential context of group interaction implies that decorated pottery played a part in those gatherings, perhaps by creating an enriched environment for them, or giving the attendants an opportunity to express individual identities and affiliations through the different configurations of decoration, a possibility which can be placed alongside the use of separate juglets associated with each bowl. The context of group gatherings and consumption also draws a parallel with tomb assemblages, which could be associated with funerary ceremonies involving the same elements (Steele 2004: 287). At the same time, the high percentages indicate more limited opportunity for one or few of the participants to distinguish themselves strongly from the group through the use of elaborate pottery. Perhaps, then, we can interpret the fact of decoration as a group characteristic, while its kind or specific manifestation as individual.

MCIII-LCI: The data

The end of the MC and the beginning of the LC period is when radical changes can be seen in the archaeology and the society of Cyprus. These are the beginnings of the transformation of the small-scale communities we have seen so far into urbanized societies heavily involved in the Eastern Mediterranean trade. Regionalism now becomes a major issue, and pottery is involved in the important problems of exchange and how it was carried out, how these changes came to be, and what the actual processes were. How decorated pottery works with these will be the subject of the following section. In it, MCIII and LCI were grouped, not only because they are part of the same process and therefore share interpretative problems, but also due to different regional sequences, which still create dating issues that are only now being untangled, and result in a degree of necessary lumping of those two periods.

In dating, Crewe's (2007) re-examination of practically all available deposits from those periods has proved to be invaluable and is consulted when available, so that a unified perspective can be established. Finally, a practical point that also needs to be made is that ware categories in this period are more often defined by the presence and kind of painted decoration on them, so it is easier to produce minimum estimates for decoration. The exceptions to this are Base Ring I (BRI) ware, which is often decorated in relief, and Plain White (PW), which despite its name often has impressed, relief or rope decoration. In those cases, unless the numbers for decoration are reported, it is more difficult to evaluate them.

Kalopsidha-*Ayios Iakovos* is one of the most important sites for this period, providing part of a house assemblage from Trench 3 (see fig. 7.20), dated to MCIII by Åström (1966: 37) and with a few reservations to LCI by Crewe (2007: 50), as well as some undisturbed strata with very interesting characteristics in Trench 9 (see fig. 7.21). Åström supplied numbers of sherds per ware in the layers (which are arbitrary) and deposits of Trench 3. In Table 7.16, I present the sherds found in the second layer, some of which could have come from a floor deposit and in Table 7.17 the finds from a cavity north of Wall A, which was probably filled when the wall was constructed (Åström 1966: 40-46). Crewe (2007: 50-51) re-examined this assemblage, combining the material from the floors and the layers above them and changed some of the assignations, importantly identifying some Canaanite jars. This revised aggregate data is presented in Table 7.18. On the basis of this, I have estimated the potential surface treatments according to the absolute minimum likely amount of decoration present (Table 7.19 and Chart 7.7). WP, Red-on-Red/Black (RonR/B), Red/Black Slip

Reserved (R/BSRes) and composite are all painted by definition. BS II is usually not decorated in eastern Cyprus (Åström 1972a: 89-103), so it has been counted as slipped. PWHM is described as often having relief bands with incision or rope ornaments on the shoulders of jars (Åström 1972a: 126-129), so an informed estimate of 25% of the sherds in this ware has been assigned to this category. In other cases, where full catalogues are available, it can be seen that it is actually a conservative estimate, and it is only meant as an illustration. PWWM is considered smoothed/slipped. In the absence of information, all painted decoration was considered simple. These give us a total figure of 20.2% of decorated pottery, most of it would have been simple, and less than 1% of which is imported from elsewhere in Cyprus or beyond it.

Trench 9 was not associated with architectural remains, but a very large amount of pottery was found in it which, according to Åström, shows the transition from MC III to LC I. Levels 72 and 64C are undisturbed and "pure MC" according to the publication (Åström 1966: 48-49), while Level 71 dates to LCI. Tables 7.20 and 7.21 present the percentages of wares in Level 72, which contains 348 sherds in total, and Level 64C (154 sherds in total). Table 7.22 and Chart 7.8 show the percentages in Level 71, where a much larger number of sherds was found, around 3098 (Åström 1966: 49-57). The most striking feature of this is the very strong presence of WP pottery at all levels. Due to this, it is more productive to use the rates of this ware as estimates for the minimum percentage of decoration, eliminating the necessity for calculations of potential surface treatments. These show that at the very least around 65% of sherds from 64C have painted decoration, 61% from 72 and 55% from 71. Åström interpreted these deposits as a possible dump outside a settlement, but as we will see this is unlikely, considering their composition.

Enkomi is one of the coastal sites established in this period and will later in LC grow to be one of the most important settlements on the island. It was excavated partly by the French Expedition under Courtois (1986) and partly by the Department of Antiquities under Dikaios (1969; 1971). Dikaios published information on the percentages of sherds in each ware in each Level in Areas I and III and a tomb. This material was re-examined by Crewe in her study of Enkomi, who made substantial changes to their analysis. This, more recent, data will be used here, originating from Levels A and IA (see Tables 7.23-7.24 and Charts 7.9-7.10; Adapted from Crewe 2007: 99-126; 133-143. See figs 7.22-7.27). In Level IA, a large, independent

rectangular structure is built in Area III, which is interpreted as a fortress, and a three-winged building in constructed in Area I (Crewe 2007: 75-80). These levels are not exactly contemporary in every area, something that must be kept in mind when comparing the data. Also, Level A is very under-represented, which is why the data from it were not included in the relevant chart.

Given the detail in the definitions of wares it would not be very productive to try to calculate surface treatments, but it is again possible to estimate a minimum percentage of decorated pottery, using the ware percentages in combination with more detailed information provided by Crewe, such as what percentage of the pottery is actually R/BSRes (and therefore painted), rather than simply R/BS. As always however, incised and relief decoration is harder to estimate. For Area III, Level IA, at least 22.2% of the sherds are decorated, and of the total 2.3% are likely to have complex decoration (in which I have included the categories of bichrome and WSI, which typically has carefully executed ladder patterns which would require time and attention to produce). At the end of the same level, the percentage is 23.9%, with 1.3% likely being complex. The overall percentage of decoration is similar between the two phases, but there are differences in their makeup, with WP being the most common treatment in the earlier one and RonR/B later. In Area I, at least 42.8% of the pottery is decorated in Level IA and 42.2% at the end of it. The difference between the two areas could be attributed to chronology: they are not entirely contemporaneous, and the building on Area I is earlier than the one in Area III, the material in it predating the more common use of Plain White pottery (2007:127).

One of the new elements in this period is the diversification not only of the pottery according to region, but also of the types of sites, which earlier were either cemeteries or villages situated mostly in good agricultural lands or in the zone between that and areas suitable for copper exploitation. Now new ones appear, such as Myrtou-*Pigadhes*, a sanctuary (Catling 1957: 26-59; Du Plat 1957) or settlements which target the exploitation of copper deposits, such as Politiko *Phorades* (Knapp, Kassianidou and Donnelly 1999). Another new type of site, considered typical of the phase and connected to many of the interpretations suggested of the character of MCIII-LCI, are fortresses, such as Nitovikla (see fig. 7.28). The dating of Nitovikla has come under contention (Hult 1992a: 165-167). The site was originally excavated by Sjoqvist in 1929 as part of the Swedish Cyprus Expedition and the material, which was saved in its entirety, was re-investigated by Hult. She dated the period before the

construction of the fortress (Pre-Period I) to MCIII but continuing into LCIA and Period I from LCIA to LCIB. Crewe (2007: 53-55) partly agreed with Hult's conclusions but argued for a dating closer to the later side of that range, so to LCIA for pre-Period I.

Hult published detailed data on the ceramic material from Trenches I-III (Hult 1992b: 20-23). The data from reliable contexts for Pre-Period I (225 sherds) and Period I (179 sherds) have been amalgamated and re-examined by Crewe (2007: 53-55), who made substantial revisions in the classifications. I will use this revised data here, presented in Table 7.25 and Chart 7.11, with the cautionary note that the sample size is small, and the reliable contexts few. From these, it is possible once again to create rough estimates for surface treatments, following the same process outlined for Trench 3, in Table 7.26 and Chart 7.12. However, since this assemblage dates more likely in LC, I will not risk assumptions on how much of the PW pottery (see fig. 7.29) has relief decoration (see Åström 1972b: 225-232). These calculations result in the conclusion that around 27% of the pottery from pre-Phase I Nitovikla is decorated and 10% from Phase I, a large decrease. In addition to that, if we classify bichrome pottery (see fig. 7.30) as more complex, we notice that it is present as a small proportion in pre-Phase I, but absent in the following phase.

An opportunity to examine a deposit from a context of use which is usually lost comes from the exploration of the seabed at Maroni-*Tsaroukkas*, directly connected to trade via the sea. The site was surveyed by the Maroni Tsaroukkas Seabed Project and it was part of an anchorage used in the LBA (Manning *et al.* 2002). The specific deposit of interest to us was found underwater. Study of the weathering and the artefacts it was made up of, especially the stone anchors, demonstrated that it was deposited directly into the sea and was not a product of erosion. It dates to the same period as Trench 3 in Kalopsidha, parallels to which have been identified in the characteristics of the ceramics as well. The group is small, being made up only of 75 sherds, but attention deserves to be paid to it due to its context and consistent character. Most of these sherds (see fig. 7.31) are catalogued, which permits us to ascertain its composition and even see how much of the PW pottery is decorated by raised incised or finger-impressed bands (see Table 7.27) and calculate the full rather than minimal numbers for decoration (18.7%).

Finally, from a mortuary context, Tomb 1 at Galinoporni offers an opportunity to look at the funerary assemblage from the Karpas, which is home to the very

distinctive RonR and RonB pottery styles (which we have already encountered in some numbers at Enkomi), and is in use exactly over the period of the MCIII-LCIA transition which interests us here. It was excavated in 1956 by the Department of Antiquities and published by Crewe (2009). Aside from the pottery (see Table 7.28), it also contains 8 copper-base objects and 6 spindle whorls. It is impressive that, among the restorable vessels, more than 80% of the pottery is decorated, and of those which are not, two (c. 4.3% of the total) are Levantine imports. One of the RonB vessels is described as especially fine, and all of the Cypriot pottery in the tomb is recognised as having been produced locally. This combination will be discussed in greater detail in the section that follows.

MCIII-LCI: An island society in motion

In MCIII-LCI, new sites were founded, several of them with a coastal orientation, some of which will become important centres, such as Hala Sultan Tekke, Enkomi and Toumba tou Skourou. It is an open question where the population of these sites originated from. It has been suggested that, since the occupation of Enkomi followed the abandonment of Kalopsidha, this represents the movement of the same group of people, or alternatively that the population who settled Enkomi was involved in the destruction of Kalopsidha. On the other hand, the combination of characteristics from the different surrounding areas seen at the early phases of the site could also indicate the concentration of population from different parts, perhaps over a brief period of time (Åström 1966: 140; Crewe 2007). Some evidence suggests an increase in conflict in this period, including the appearance of mass burials and of buildings identified as fortresses, such as the building in Area III at Enkomi (Keswani 1996; Knapp 1986). Some researchers have questioned whether the origin of this increased insecurity is internal or external. Whether, however, these indications are all expressions of the same phenomenon is a question that also hangs on dating — according to the re-dating of the fortress at Nitovikla, this was constructed after the end of MCIII, which is the period most connected with unrest (Hult 1992: 74-76).

Beyond the nature of the transition, there are several new features in MCIII-LCI, outlined in Chapters 1 and 4, and involving especially the renewed emphasis on regional distinctiveness and the cultivation of overseas contacts, resulting in the

integration of Cyprus in the trade networks of the Eastern Mediterranean. This network and the products travelling through it are completely intertwined both with social and historical developments and the role that pottery, as material and a container, could and did play in them. The deposit with the closest direct connection to trade is the one from Maroni (taken only as a general indication since it is a small and isolated sample), and in that case it seems that the overall rate of decoration (18.7%) is within the normal range for the period, if not a little low, and that there is clearly an orientation towards closed shapes, some of which are decorated, rather than decorated forms per se. Decoration here is incidental rather than the centre of focus. It also includes Canaanite jars, which could be the results of international contacts, or alternatively they could have arrived there via another site on the island, likely Hala Sultan Tekke (Crewe 2007: 45).

Changes are also happening in pottery production, which start pointing towards a direction of greater standardisation and specialisation and might be related to the evidence for trade. The pace and scale of the process is essential to understanding it, and understanding how the people making and using the pottery could have introduced and manipulated this changed product, and what, if any, changes we can see in decoration due to it. In some areas, slow trends starting from the end of MCII result in a loss of decoration complexity in MC III, as in Deneia (Frankel and Webb 2007: 103-106). I described the RP of Deneia as especially characterised by elaborate incised decoration which is highly distinctive, and creates an individual character in every vessel, a heavy investment in distinctiveness, repeatedly emphasized in the publication. The communities using the cemetery appeared to especially value this characteristic, which however by MCIII became lost. The use of a multiple incising tool created more uniform decoration, and the range of shapes decreased as well. This change could be related to the introduction of WP pottery which starts playing a bigger part, but it is possible that the individuality of the earlier MC vessels and their potential as a medium of individual expression could not be replaced, and were irretrievably lost. Conversely, there was greater orientation towards the production of pottery styles that demonstrated an alignment and familiarity with Levantine communities and an urban way of life. As Crewe (2007: 19-23; 149-151) proposed, this shift could have been a significant factor leading to the initial production of wheelmade pottery, which was now introduced for the first time and was used side-by-side with handmade.

Some data on pottery use come from Enkomi, which is especially interesting, because knowing that it developed into a major urban centre, we can investigate stages along that development. It is important, however, not to project forward. We know that Level I Enkomi was very different from its later self, more obviously in architecture and town planning, with buildings being placed sparsely on the ground (Courtois *et al.* 1986: 5; Keswani 1996). At this level of occupation it is very difficult to decide if "urbanization" is yet the right term to describe the developments that take place (Crewe 2007: 7). In addition to that, the appearance of social stratification, with an elite using symbols to differentiate themselves, is only securely demonstrated in the mortuary record in the beginning of the LCII period (Keswani 1989). In terms of decoration, the most common decorated ware in Area I is the RonR/B ware, which is typical of the Karpass cultural region, at the limit of which Enkomi lies (Merrillees 1979). It is interesting that 79-83% of the entire RonR/B assemblage is made up of bowls (Crewe 2007: 120), which differs from the percentages in Karpass itself, where a wider range of shapes is represented. In Enkomi, this decorated ware could serve a specific function as a serving and consumption vessel. Moreover, its distinctive fabric shows that it is imported on this site, presumably specifically for that purpose. It is partly the greater popularity of RonR/B and WP wares that give significantly higher percentages of decoration to Area I than Area III. The Area III building, being slightly later, is built and in use after Plain White wares became common serving vessels, which causes the overall quantity of decorated pottery in the assemblage to decline.

An interesting and perhaps related point is the decrease in decorated pottery over time in Nitovikla – as we have seen from an estimate of 27% for pre-Period I to 10% for Period I. The pottery found in it shows that the site has no special connections to trade, and that before the building of the fortress at the end of LCIA, according to the new dating, it seems to have had an ordinary domestic function – and therefore presumably an ordinary domestic ceramic assemblage. Hult ascertains that aside from the chronological differences the pottery remains the same as the pre-fortress period, but at the same time she notes an increase in wheel-made wares, which she interprets as an indication of an increased interest in an efficient economy (Hult 1992b: 74-76). Crewe (2007: 55) argued that the numbers of wheel-made pottery might have been overestimated and that, assuming the contexts are reliable, it is likely that the decrease in RonR/B wares may have been associated not with chronology, but with a change in the function of the site, from general domestic to

more specialised, with an emphasis on plainwares, containers, storage jars and cooking pots. The second interpretation is more consistent with the findings of my study, which suggests a decrease in decoration overall which is much sharper than the one usually found in domestic contexts.

At the same time, we get some hints on the use of pottery in other kinds of specialised settings, such as the impressive quantity of White Painted pottery in Trench 9 in Kalopsidha, which Åström interpreted as dump from a settlement. It has also been noted that the material has parallels with Athienou-*Bamboulari tis Koukounninas*: large numbers of miniature vessels, animal bones and an association with metal working, all of which are features connected with cult sites (Crewe 2007: 52). An alternative suggestion is that the site, which provides evidence for pottery production in the form of misfired sherds, could have been involved in the supply of decorated containers and the repackaging of goods for export. Firstly, a simple domestic explanation is unsatisfactory given the large quantities of WP pottery, which moreover occurs across three layers, and is not a one-off accident of discovery. Secondly, the coincidence of many different characteristics with Athienou is noteworthy. Finally, given the dating of the levels, there is the possibility that we are seeing a practice persisting over time, which would also be consistent with cult. If this is the most likely interpretation, then we might argue that painted pottery was considered more suitable not only for funerary contexts (as in the Galinoporni tomb), but also cultic ones, and it could therefore have special associations or importance.

LCI-II: The data

Enkomi, as in the previous period, benefits from the detailed study of the ceramic data by Crewe. Levels IB and IIA represent the relevant periods (see figs. 7.32-7.37). Level IB is the richest in terms of data on occupation, and Area I remains more sparsely represented than Area III (Crewe 2007: 75-81). The percentages of wares can be seen in Tables 7.29 and 7.31, and a simplified estimate of likely surface treatments in Tables 7.30 and 7.32 and Charts 7.13 and 7.14 (Adapted from 2007: 96-126 and tables 17.1-17.23), which is, as always, a minimum. These estimates were not produced for the levels with the smallest samples. Finally, a note of caution: The "LIIA initial Level" in Area I was included due to its interesting composition, but it

should not be considered representative of an entire level, since it mostly comes from a single room which has a distinctive character, as the differences in the proportions of wares can show.

In addition to the settlement, there is also more information available from graves, such as Tomb 1851, published by Lagarce and Lagarce (1985) and offering a rare large (for the standards of tomb assemblages) number of complete vessels from an unlooted grave, with a use period falling in the LCI-II range. The chamber tomb contains six burials arranged on shelves, and it is not possible to associate most of the contents with any single one. The vessels were found on a single layer lying directly on the floor (see fig. 7.38) and it was not possible to distinguish groups or zoning in them, making it possible that they represent a single deposition event (1985: 21-30). It is likely that with every new burial, the chamber was cleared out and new material was placed in it, and that the single sherds that were found on the floor originate from vessels broken during previous cleaning operations. This is the reason why tomb 1851 was selected for study here, despite the fact that it is only a small (in absolute numbers) group of 24 vessels: there are reasonable grounds to assume that we might be dealing with a self-contained group of pottery (see fig. 7.39), rather than an accumulation over many generations of use. This specific group likely dates to LCIB. In addition to the pottery, the tomb also contains an ostrich egg, rock crystal weights, a rock crystal tool and bronze scales. A full catalogue (1985: 30-40) is provided alongside the percentages of wares (1985: 49, see Table 7.33), which permits a more precise determination of surface treatments (Table 7.34 and Chart 7.15). In addition to offering a proportion of decoration (11/24 vessels, see figs. 7.40-7.42), this table shows how much more complex a picture emerges when it is possible to move beyond estimates, as well as cautions by showing that we lose a part of the decoration in BR ware, which often has relief.

In the previous period there were some indications of more specialised sites, but now these become undeniable. Athienou produces in this period its most impressive assemblage, including the largest concentration of intact pottery found by the date of publication in Cyprus, around 2,000 complete vessels, many of which are miniatures (Dothan and Ben-Tor 1983). There is also strong evidence that a large part of this pottery was produced on the site, which was also involved in metalworking, but unfortunately the publication provides little information on ware quantities. Two further sites are especially interesting from our point of view because they are

intensely involved with ceramic production: Sanidha and Toumba tou Skourou. Toumba tou Skourou provides information for production of pottery and mudbricks at a large scale, alongside related architectural installations. Unfortunately, a lot of the material was lost after 1974 and no detailed pottery analysis is possible at this point. We know, however, that the assemblage had many interesting elements, such as a tendency for the potters to experiment with transferring characteristics from one form to another (Crewe 2007: 41-43).

Sanidha is located in the southern foothills of Troodos and the progress of the excavations, which are part of the Vasilikos Valley Project, has been regularly published in the RDAC. The main period of use is LCIIB (Todd and Hadjicosti 1991), and the site is interpreted as having a specialised function as a production centre. This was initially a rescue excavation in an area heavily disturbed by agriculture, but some in situ features and some large accumulations of deposits have been identified. In all deposits reported in 1991 from Area I (with the exception of 4.2, which also happened to be on of the few in situ deposits) almost all the pottery was either WS II or Monochrome, both of which were found in equal numbers. The excavators also suggest that part of what is called Monochrome in Sanida might actually be a production stage of WS II, which could have undergone a two-step slipping process, and that it was also used in its own right. In Areas II and III, WSII made up the majority of the pottery, accompanied by a small component of PW. Similar trends were observed as more areas were investigated in later excavations, with the quantities of monochrome increasing in later layers (Todd and Pilides 1992). Deposit 4.2, mentioned above, had almost no WS II and instead large quantities of PW jars, bowls and cooking pans. It also dates later than most of the site, to LCIIC.

To get an impression of the scale and variation, in Area 12, which was excavated in 1992 (Todd *et al.* 1993) around 10,000 sherds are from WSII vessels, compared to 1,800 monochrome, 273 R/BSWM, 116 BR, 100 from cooking pots and only 60 from PW. On the other hand, in Area 11 which was excavated in the same year, and was interpreted as an activity area, the proportions are very different. Around 1,750 WS sherds were found, most of them small and very worn, and 2,100 Monochrome, larger and better preserved. There were also 180 sherds from cooking pots, but much smaller quantities of BR, and R/BS. There are also much smaller quantities of wasters, but more non-ceramic artefacts, such as spindle whorls and metal objects. Overall, the vast majority of WS sherds came from small open shapes.

The decoration on WSII was, typically for that ware, characterised as simple and "sloppy", so it would be reasonably accurate to say that in most contexts there would be a rate of at least 50% pottery with simple geometric decoration. There is, however, a more complex component as well, identified by the excavators as "WS II Parallel Line Style", but the only available information is that it was found in "substantial quantities". Wasters were found in all excavation plots (1991, 1992), belonging to various types of WS ware, but no kilns were identified. In Area 12, less than 1% of all WS sherds were wasters. Monochrome wasters were found, but were rare.

For the later part of the period, data is available from Hala Sultan Tekke, both from mortuary and from some limited domestic/industrial contexts (see fig. 7.43). This site is among those newly established in the MCIII-LCI period, but the archaeological coverage so far only permits investigation into its later phases. Tombs 1 and 2 are good examples (Karageorghis 1976). Both date to LCIIB-IIC (Tomb 2 slightly earlier than Tomb 1), and they were both used for multiple burials. There is no discernible stratigraphy inside the tombs. Tomb 1 was looted, while 2 was better preserved. In addition to the pottery (see fig. 7.44), they contained gold, bronze, lead, faience, ivory, stone, clay, carnelian, seals, an ostrich egg, fishbones, seashealls, copper slag, charcoal and equine bones mixed with the human ones. The publication of the pottery contents in catalogue form (1976: 72-76; 78-87) permits an assessment of the assemblages based on the represented wares as well as surface treatments for Tomb 1 (see Tables 7.35-7.37 and Chart 7.16). From the same settlement, in Trench 3, a ceramic deposit was discovered in a refuse pit accompanied by copper slag and tuyère fragments, which led Åström (1976: 112-117) to interpret it as refuse from a copper workshop that must have been located nearby, at the edge of the city. This pottery (see Tables 7.38 and 7.39 and Chart 7.17) dates to LCIIC, at the very end of the period of interest here.

Rough percentages of wares were also made available for a group of pottery dating to LCIIC in Kalavasos Building X (South 1988). It stands at the edge of the settlement, constructed partly by ashlar masonry, and it is the largest building discovered on the site so far. There are however indications that it is part of complex of similar buildings. A large number of pithoi was discovered in situ in a storage hall and an additional pottery deposit was found in a pit at A173, a room at the eastern part of the building. Most of this pottery is restorable. The available rough quantitative data show that about 60% is Mycenaean imports or local products in the same style, in

about equal numbers. The rest of the wares represented are, in order of frequency, WSII, WPWM II, PW, BR II, Cooking and Monochrome. No overall percentage of decoration is given, but we can note that the two most frequent Cypriot wares are by definition painted. In terms of shapes, 80% of the deposit is made up by small open forms. This, in combination with the large quantities of animal bones which were found alongside the ceramics, suggest that the deposit represents the refuse from food consumption. Little more detail is available on the surface treatments, but from what can be gleaned from the description, most of the pottery has banded decoration, with a few simple geometric pieces, and at least three have complex representational decoration.

LCI-II: Established differences

By this period, the ceramic repertoire of Cyprus looks very different from the preceding ones. The regional complexes of RonB, WP and early WS wares, with their distinct connections and identity, have been replaced by a new set of Plain White and White Painted pottery, which has its origins to northwestern and Central Cyprus and is essentially a plain and decorated version of the same utilitarian ware. Other kinds of pottery introduced in the previous period and still in use, such as Monochrome, also tend towards greater homogeneity in shapes and fabrics (Pilides 1992: 295-297). The quantities of wheel-made pottery were also steadily increasing. Meanwhile, WS and BR play the roles of fine wares and are the predominant decorated serving and consumption vessels. BR especially also becomes the object of widespread trade. To see how this process of change and development involves decoration, we can turn once again to the data from Enkomi.

In Area I, comparison between the end of Level IB and the end of Level IIA demonstrates a trend for an increase in pottery with very simple surface treatments, a sharp decrease in slipped pottery and a slight decrease of painted pottery. If the absence of bichrome and the stylistic differences between WSI and WSII are any indication, it is nearly certain that the complexity of decoration declines as well. It is possible to argue that, at least at the level of a large building in one of the central, multi-functional sites, there seems to be an increase in plain pottery at the expense of decorated, but, at the same time, the rate of decoration remains at relatively high

levels: at the end of Level IIA, at least 23% of the pottery is decorated, and that does not include BR pottery or the quantities of decoration in imported Aegean pottery. The pottery from initial Level IIA is a distinct group coming mostly from Room 142. Crewe has suggested that it could represent an elite domestic assemblage, whose decorated component would consist mostly of WSII tableware, Aegean imports and presumably a small number of WS juglets.

Area III (which we should keep in mind is a bit later; it is estimated that the main IB Level in Area III is contemporary with the Level IB end in Area I) presents a slightly different picture, but the combination of an industrial and a domestic function in it is relevant to this. We can interpret the lower percentages of decoration in Level IB initial (LC IB) as a result of that industrial function. It is also interesting that, even through Level IB main has lower percentages of decoration than its contemporary in Area I, both of them have the highest numbers for decorated sherds in their respective areas, suggesting strongly that this might be a characteristic of the period overall. Following the phase of the most intense industrial function of the Area III building, the pattern is similar to the one identified in Area I, with an increase in plain pottery (less sharply this time, due to its percentages being higher to begin with, because of a combination of the function of the building and its lower dating) and a slight decrease in decorated, which does not result in a dramatic drop. These changes are more pronounced in other sites, such as Episkopi-*Bamboula*, where every phase brings a steady increase of Plain ware, from 30% in the beginning of LCIB to up to 75% in LCIIB, with a corresponding decrease in WS, the main decorated ware, from around 26.5% to 6-11% (Crewe 2007: 46).

A source of information on more specific aspects of production are the specialised sites such as Sanidha. Although the data were limited to rough percentages, they were sufficient to indicate general trends. The predominant kinds of pottery found at the site were, naturally, the same ones that were produced there (WSII), which results in very high percentages for decorated sherds from some contexts. On the other hand, in Area 11 which was interpreted as an activity area, the proportions are more balanced, although still just under half of the sherds that were found were WSII. Therefore, the pottery produced on the site was also in widespread use in it, and was not exclusively transported somewhere else. Another interesting piece of information offered by Sanidha, is that the simpler and more elaborate forms of the same pottery (in this case standard WSII and the finer style known as WSII

Parallel Line) were manufactured at the same place and by the same people. Production sites are themselves subjects to changes over time, as the differences between later and earlier deposits show in Sanidha, with a decrease in the quantity of WS pottery and the number of wasters suggesting a decline or arrest of production, and an increase in Monochrome pottery likely representing the kind of vessels in everyday use at the settlement near the end of its life. Given the interpretation suggested for the MCIII-LCI of adoption of wheel technology, in the context of a general alignment with Levantine practices and advertising that alignement, we must wonder if this association of the technology still exists: now that wheel-made pottery is more common, is there still a message to it?

Is there any degree of centralized control or intentional, guided direction over these changes, or is the direction a more flexible, less stratified response to market interests? There is, before LCIIC, no evidence for production within identified elite contexts, so physical control can be ruled out. On the other hand, the organisation of production at a larger scale, along with the ability to distribute the products and supply the workshops and producers, suggest that groups existed that had the ability to exert some measure of control, and it is likely that these were multiple. At the same time, features such as the experimentation at *Toumba tou Skourou* point at an element of self-direction by the potters. They could in some cases also be associated with specific institutions, as we have seen in the case of the relationship between cult sites, copper smelting and pottery production. This question leads to the subject of control over another area of production, metalworking. Crewe (2007: 18) argues that there is yet no evidence for an existing infrastructure that would permit restriction of access to a good as widespread on the island as copper or the knowledge of how to work it, and that it is far more likely that production was extensive rather than intensive. If this is true of copper, then it must be an even stronger argument for working with an even more readily available material like clay.

BR was identified above as an important object of export. A common question in pottery trade in general is whether is it traded as a container for something else, or the focus is the object itself. In the first case, decoration might still be an important factor, either affecting the suitability of the container, or comprising a package in association with the container, acting as a label or a signifier for it. In the second case, decoration could have an impact on the perceived value or desirability of the object and serve to connect it with information such as its area of origin, which in the end is

what makes it desirable, rather than the decoration itself. In the export of Cypriot vessels, the data suggests that there are multiple factors at work. For the export of small closed vessels, especially BR juglets with a smaller quantity of RLWM, the contents are clearly important, and it is interesting that the most elaborate types are not traded abroad but restricted to Cyprus itself (Gittlen 1981). This could suggest that the distinctive form of the vessel was sufficient to indicate contents and/or origin, which was the main target, rather than the bigger investment in decoration (Artzy 1985: 93-99). For the trade in open vessels, we might be seeing a broadly similar phenomenon, with the "sloppy" WSII bowls remaining a popular trade object, maybe because their consumers were not looking precisely for elaborate decoration, but for the kind of decoration which shows a connection to Cyprus. Demand for this kind of form, placing emphasis on certain aspects of the appearance but not the complexity of the decoration, would have removed the impetus for Cypriot workshops to create more elaborate products, at least for the external market.

Ceramic imports also start playing a bigger part. We are stopping just at the limit of the major influx of Mycenaean types and their local imitations, which can be seen in the latest deposits I presented, such as Hala Sultan Tekke and Kalavasos. I will not engage with the issues they pose here, since it opens completely new avenues, but there is a point to make based on the implications of the types imported and the level of social control they might be associated with. Sherratt has suggested that the presence and the kinds of imports are related to the level of control exercised in each society, and whether there is a central command structure that needs to be maintained, and in the case of Cyprus the presence of large numbers of imported open vessels is associated with a low degree of control over trade (Sherratt 1999: 182). Mycenaean pottery aside, these late tomb deposits combine a great variety of materials, including exotic and imported ones such as faience and ostrich eggs and metal wealth. In addition to that, they also show interesting practices, such as the combination of equine and human interments – both elements which recall strategies encountered in Enkomi. Assuming that the catalogue is complete, a large proportion of the vessels are decorated, and a large proportion also uses complex and representational decoration. Understanding the exact interplay between pottery, the rest of the contents of the tombs and the status of the occupants is more difficult. Merrillees defines the assemblages from Tombs 1 and 2 as varied, but not especially rich (1976: 89), while based on the comparisons of Keswani (1996) they should probably be classified as

elite. Not being fully aware of the social level of the tomb, it is more difficult to draw conclusions, but based on the diversity of artefacts and the inclusion of large quantities of decorated pottery, it is possible to suggest that it shows a strategy of combining indications of status from a variety of sources, and that the preference for decorated vessels in tomb contexts might be continuing from the previous period. Finally, the findings in Trench 3 at Hala Sultan Tekke, and the very low quantity of decoration found in it, reinforces further the association noticed many times over so far between industrial contexts and high quantities of plain wares.

Discussion and Conclusions

If discussion of the decorated ceramics of Cyprus could be boiled down to one single question, at least in a comparative context, that would probably be "Is the decorated pottery in Cyprus and its use as distinctive as we would expect from a place with such a unique development?" In other words, does the decorated pottery have anything to do with the nature of political organisation? After this detailed study, the answer is probably yes. In the early MC period, decorative traditions are mostly represented by incision on polished surfaces in some areas and White Painted in others. This decoration is frequently elaborate, carefully executed and highly individual. Its creators, and perhaps its consumers as well, appear to have a special awareness of decorated pottery as a category and of its distinctiveness. Decorated pottery such as this can have an especially strong presence in settings of communal consumption and in the funerary sphere. The mortuary realm could have acted as an arena for social competition from an early part of the Cypriot Middle Bronze Age, perhaps before we start seeing signs of it in other areas of life. There are some hints that especially complex decorated pottery could have played a part in this, but it never seems overwhelming, or completely convincing as a deciding factor, and it is definitely not at the same level as metal artefacts. In a setting of communal consumption, decorated pottery in Cyprus has a distinct flavour. It seems to be different from Minoan Crete, where we see repeatedly the pattern of a few very elaborate vessels in a context with large quantities of simpler ones. It is also different from Egypt, where the chronologically concentrated references of pottery decoration to an elite ideal of life create an aspirational setting. In early MC Cyprus, we find larger quantities of

decoration, more equally distributed among the participants, and less overt use of decoration for social competition than other societies, such as Crete.

Some of the distinctiveness of the elaborate decoration of MC I and II pottery is lost later in the MC period. Pottery in that period gives the impression of moving from an association with an individual community or even a single user into a wider circle, and becoming part of an identification with a larger region or social group: MCIII-LCI is when regionalism in ceramics reaches a peak. Production in the previous period was probably in the hands of a few individuals working part time and supporting multiple households, but this is now changing. It is not clear if this change is driven by the producers or the consumers of the pottery. In this period there is an increase in the number and size of settlements, and there are clearer indications for the acquisition of elite status by some members of the communities. Still, there are no indications that pottery is particularly used as means of display or aggrandisement. It is likely that decorated pottery retained the same role it did in the previous period, with an emphasis on use in communal settings and stressing the regional identity.

Trade connections, which also develop strongly in this period, do not seem to be especially connected to decoration either, but more to the appearance of the pottery as a sign of its origin. By this I do not mean that the appearance of the vessel is irrelevant or meaningless, but rather that, in the case of Cypriot pottery as a trade object, decoration cannot be interpreted, as it often is, as a focus-pulling devise to the vessel as an integrated whole, but rather it is a visual reference to something external, acting as a sign. That can be connected to the contents, or instantly recall (through the previously-established property of decoration of binding things together) a whole package of information, including contents, quality and intended usage (Bevan 2010: 47). And since the appearance of vessels has this potential, it can also be consciously employed and manipulated, perhaps even creating tensions between the associations it calls upon and the actual properties of the vessel and its contents.

Sherratt and Sherratt (2001) bring a context-aware use of market terms to the examination of the interaction between production and consumer choice and demands and the resulting innovation in material culture. Added value played an important part in this process, understood not just as a strictly defined materials strategy of production but as a whole package involving products and their usage, the practices through which they were habitually and appropriately consumed (2001: 18-20). This is relevant to Cyprus because areas at the edges of systems are especially active, as

they negotiate the transformation from sources of raw materials to suppliers of commodities under their own control. These areas could create their own niches in a wider Eastern Mediterranean market by developing specialisations and creating products which are especially associated with their region of origin. This brings to mind the suggestions I made about the use of decoration in Cypriot non-container exports and its potential function and value as a sign of origin. This involvement of previously more marginal areas creates the potential for changes and expansion in the regimes of value and the introduction of new kinds of products, which complicate social positions and negotiations at both the producing and the receiving areas, creating or feeding new consumer classes, such as the sub-elites Sherratt mentions. The same products, whose value is in a status of negotiation, can be the ticket for areas to enter pre-existing networks as intermediaries (Bevan 2010b: 41), when they are already conveniently located and have developed an urban infrastructure, taking advantage of location and conditions, again as in Cyprus. Additionally, these new, added-value products, which have already invested in associations with regions of origin, are ideal candidates for "creative marketing" (Sherratt and Sherratt 2001: 27-28).

Bevan (2010b: 35) identifies the potential for branding when mass-produced goods, aspirational consumers and transregional systems of exchange co-exist, regardless of the scale of the economy, recalling Sherratt and Sherratt's way of employing market terms while avoiding anachronism. Cyprus in this period does produce pottery, both containers and not, in quantity, as clearly illustrated by sites such as Sanidha and Toumba tou Skourou. The aspirational consumers were just discussed, and there is no doubt that a transregional system of exchange was in place in the eastern Mediterranean. Marketing, in Bevan's understanding, involves attaching meanings and associations to products (2010b: 36) (and by now the concept of attachment should lead us immediately to the capabilities and potential of decoration) and integrating them in a social context in the same way that people are. Because of this function of marketing, it has the potential to intervene between the different ways that people relate to one another and direct, define them or create tensions (2010b: 39). This is where the creativity mentioned above comes in: the physical appearance of the object could act as a mark for a package of quality, quantity and the kinds of relationships that go with them (2010b: 47). This process involves a wide variety of products leaving the island, often originating from the upland zones (as suggested by

the location of the specialised workshops) and being assembled in the coastal urban centres as a consistent package to be exported, with metal of course playing a primary role in the process (2010b: 55). These multiple ties between products, their appearance, and the associations they summon, create an ideal environment for brands to be connected to objects and be transferred through the trade networks at external areas, where these associations can be accepted, cemented and recognized as standing for a entire categories (e.g. high quality products from the island where copper comes from).

I have perhaps focused disproportionately on the category of non-container vessels when discussing the potential of branding and pot marketing for understanding exports from the island. This does not mean that the decoration of container vessels did not play similar roles of definition and demarcation being, in that sense, a different kind of decoration, but it is because in the case of open vessels it is more feasible to disentangle threads of meaning, having less of them to begin with, and knowing that wherever the value of the object lies, it is in itself and not what is in it. In the case of closed vessels, particularly juglets, which are especially relevant to Cyprus, the packaging and decoration of the contained product is part of the processing which adds secondary value and attaches meanings to the container-contained unit. These meanings can range from very straightforward (a sign for what the contents are) to more indirect, such as evoking specific associations with materials, the members of society who consume them, their manners, and the quality the whole package evokes (Bevan 2010b: 67). It is also useful to keep in mind that processing is not limited to the vessel but also involves the manipulation of the traded substance itself, for example with the addition of further ingredients in wine.

Having discussed extensively this function of decoration and its employment in the course of trade, what are the implications for the nature of these decorated vessels? Moreover, is it possible to suggest a difference in the understanding of the vessels between the production side, Cyprus, and the receiving side? In this process, it would appear that Cypriot centres decorated exported vessels, both containers and non-containers, because that was the prevailing way to treat pottery. During the transfer to different social contexts, however, this decoration sheds its Cypriot associations, such as regional or social affiliations, and acquires new ones, integrating a complex of information and associations in the vessel as a whole, including its contents. This affects the desirability of the vessel, not because of the decoration in

itself, but because of what it says. This interpretation also helps explain why the Cypriot ceramic trade remains unaffected, or increases, despite the gradual decrease of investment in ceramics (for example in the transition from WS I to WS II): their desirability is not affected because the less elaborate decoration and manufacture still satisfactorily carry the same associations to the receiving end. Additionally, this whole process feeds back to the producers or distributors, resulting in a greater awareness of the conditions under which pottery is being received and a more conscious employment of decorative practices, including the confirmation of a reduced need for additional investment in the appearance of vessels.

Some contexts in MCIII-LCI go in different directions, showing two different kinds of specialised function, which have almost opposite effects on the use of pottery. In specialised and more tightly organised contexts, such as fortresses or industrial areas, decoration is less present. In contexts with a cultic or funerary association on the other hand, more decorated pottery is being used. All these different elements, together with other important aspects such as the technology of construction of the vessels come together to form a complex web of signals that can be delivered through pottery.

Finally, in LCI-II, greater social differences had been established between groups, and some areas of life have become much more structured. This affects decorated pottery as well, which has lost a lot of variation and is now limited to fewer types, forming a more clearly organised complex. Despite the standardization in appearance, decorated pottery as a percentage of total assemblages, although diminished, remains high in most contexts (even without accounting for the fact that it is in all cases an underestimate), with the exception of those associated with industrial activities (especially metalworking) where most of the evidence comes from. Once again, with the exception of a very specific category of imports at the end of the period, pottery does not seem to be used in the course of social competition. We know, however, that competition between groups exists in this period and it is fierce, as different strands of evidence come together to show lack of a single group holding absolute control, which presents opportunities for access to authority in different ways, most of which involve trade and the creation of connections.

Overall, decorated pottery plays an important part as a feature in the material environment that was part of everyday life in Cyprus throughout the period of study. It has an even stronger presence in settings which are likely to have had a special

meaning attached to them, but it almost never seems to be used as part of an exclusionary strategy. This context of use of decoration is one we have not encountered so far in the eastern Mediterranean. Finally, one of the biggest differences from both Crete and Egypt is how constant decoration remains as a quantity. Even with the lack of finer scaling in the complexity of decoration in some occasions, this method which examines a wide range of contexts and assemblages should have picked up more variation if it was present, but still there is an absence of dramatic highs and lows in decoration's complexity. As I said in the introductory sections, this is a very encouraging time for research into Cyprus, and as new data are uncovered it will be very intriguing to see how the tendencies identified here will stand their test.

Chapter 8. The Levant: a case study in shifting scales

Introduction

This chapter explores the part decorated pottery plays in Levantine societies by using broader evaluations of the trends in pottery decorating practice through time, in combination with a more detailed level of published information on specific deposits in order to test, illustrate and ground the more general view. In the previous chapters, I have carried out largely self-contained case studies on Crete, Egypt and Cyprus, but this last case study plays a different part in the context of the whole. It acts as a connective stage between the previous case studies, and the final chapter dedicated to the comparative overview of the development of pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean. This dual approach, which will be set out in the following section, is also echoed somewhat by the questions I am attempting to answer in this part. The Levant is a very useful macro-region for combining the comparative and the relational approach, which exist side by side in this study. On the comparative side, what distinguishes it from the areas I have dealt with so far is the wide range of political arrangements that can be found there, and their shifts through time. Additionally, it offers the opportunity to study interactions in two different ways: through the impact of the engagement with larger, imperial political entities, and through trade. The Levant is, therefore, important because it is physically, as well as methodologically, between the rest of the macroregions and it adds to the range of social arrangements we can examine.

This chapter will be structured following the geographical and political separation into southern and northern Levant, with two additional sections, one dedicated to the evidence for ceramic connections that this area is so suited to providing, and a smaller one which addresses the questions related to Nuzi ware, a particularly elaborate style of pottery which has attracted attention since the early days of designing the case studies and research goals of this thesis. The division is somewhat arbitrary, but I have decided to include the sites in modern-day Israel, Palestine and Jordan in the southern Levant, while Lebanon and Syria make up the northern. The grouping of these under a single macroregion as ‘The Levant’ does not

mean that the region under study is internally homogeneous and consistent. In fact, the opposite is true, offering opportunities for internal as well as external comparisons: alongside the shared themes in their organization (especially urbanization), their close contacts and the similarities and constant exchanges in pottery styles, there are significant differences between the North and the South. The northern Levant is structured territorially in larger, state-like, units, which are indigenous in the Middle Bronze Age and become part of even larger externally centred empires in the Late Bronze Age. Throughout the second millennium, this kind of structure supports a consistently high level of social stratification with solidly established hierarchies. In the southern Levant, on the other hand, urban centres (re-) develop in the Middle Bronze Age and consolidate into smaller, city-state formations. These are linked through networks, some of them hierarchical, enabling the movement of goods and practices through the region, often percolating gradually from a few more central locations to the rest. In the Late Bronze Age the same area fell under Egyptian control. Different sites established a variety of relationships with this external power and followed diverse trajectories in the later parts of the second millennium, with fluctuations in independence and complexity.

Having set out this contrast within the Levant, it is possible to study its material correlates, especially in regard to the use of pottery and its decoration. Specifically, we can look out for a series of questions: what would the ceramic expression of a more permanent hierarchical structure versus an interconnected urban environment be, especially in regards to the quality and quantity of decoration? And how do the north and the south differ as the second millennium moves into the Late Bronze Age and there is even further divergence, with the north essentially maintaining its structures (even as part of larger empires) and the south showing a diversity of sites, some of them directly controlled by an external power? Finally, what are the potential similarities between the two areas created by the existence of palatial centres in both, by similar opportunities in regards to trade and by direct relationships with one another?

Methods

Due to the specific requirements of studying Levantine material, I have adopted an approach with two components: a broad and a more assemblage-focused one, roughly corresponding with a north/south division in the quantity and the kind of the data that are available from each. This also means that inevitably there is a slight skewing in favour of the southern Levant, from which much more recent published information exists (see fig. 8.1). At the same time, many sites of the Northern Levant feature heavily in the discussions of overseas connections and Nuzi Ware.

Passing on to the specifics of the study, a convoluted "ware and style" system is in place all over the Levant, which I have dealt with in the broader comparative chapter. Despite the debates about terminology in this area, these problems have only a minor effect on this chapter, due to adopting a single set of generalised decoration categories. In fact, in similar ways as in Cyprus, the specificity of the stylistic categories occasionally permits the attribution of at least some of the pottery to a general category with a high degree of confidence. Returning now to the question of scales, the broader one is designed to deal both with creating a more general impression and with the lack of precise information on the composition of assemblages. To take it deeper than a descriptive level, this is based on a sequence of five categories, which are also used as internal comparative measures to indicate whether the overall presence of decoration is stronger or weaker, relatively, than in the preceding period in a specific site. A score of "1" indicates no presence of decoration, or no more than a couple of sherds. Category "2" indicates occasional mentions of simple decoration and "3" occasional or frequent mentions of simple decoration along with signs of greater elaboration. A score of "4" would be associated with very common simple decoration combined with signs of greater elaboration, and a "5" would be a majority of simple decoration alongside great decorative complexity, but no greater score than 3 has been used in this chapter. These can then be correlated with the standard chronological phases of the Bronze Age. This way of following increase and decrease can also be tabulated for purposes of clarity and comparisons. These measures can be used to roughly track decoration and its complexity where no other information is available. They are especially useful for internal comparisons and can show similarities and divergences in regional trajectories, which can then be studied in association with social context.

Finally, this is combined with a more detailed level of information which can also act as an external and more objective confirmation of the general impression

acquired from the broader scale, at least when both of them are available. It is also possible to convert statistical data to generalised scores, with the understanding that this is only a heuristic measure for comparison. The data which provide more detailed information come from two sources: either quantified information provided by the publication, where this is available, or in cases where this is not possible, I utilise the "locus", a particularity of Levantine publication procedures. It is common practice there to publish and illustrate all rims and diagnostic sherds from excavation units with sufficient stratigraphic integrity. I have used the largest among these (the loci represented by more than twenty sherds) as an indication of the characteristics of the broader ceramic assemblage on the site. This is possible because the selection of sherds is not based on surface treatment, which reduces the bias, but at the same time the higher parts of the vessels, the rim, necks and shoulders are usually where decoration is found in the Levant, ensuring that decorated vessels will be most likely identified when a part of the assemblage. Finally, these numbers are considered an indication only, and they are combined and checked against one another, to establish that they are offering a consistent impression.

The southern Levant

Coastal plain

Starting the study of this region in one of the large, well-stratified sites of the Southern Levant, Megiddo has a long excavation history and a problematic record when it comes to the publication of full ceramic deposits, with some stratigraphic confusion and a focus on general types at the expense of sherds and their quantitative analysis. Investigation on the site begun in the early 20th century, but resumed in 1992, under the Institute of Archaeology at Tel Aviv university (Finkelstein *et al.* 2000: 1). A series of publications from the new excavations on the site can help understand it better. A problem, however, that often appears even in this new series is the reluctance to apply statistical analysis to the material in the absence of complete vessels (Gadot *et al.* 2006: 171).

Early MB II levels, dating from around 1800-1750 BC (Stratum XII of the earlier excavations) have been uncovered in two loci only (Ilan *et al.* 2000: 186-204). From these, the quantitative information focuses on shapes rather than surface

treatments, but decoration is most commonly found on jugs and storage jars and we can characterize it as a "2" (Ilan *et al.* 2000: 199-202). From the same area, there is very limited information on the LBA. No large enough assemblages have been found in undisturbed contexts, and no statistical analysis is provided. The trend continues for decoration being primarily associated with jars and jugs, most commonly banded and bichrome. In following seasons, although the lack of detailed information continues, the information is offered that, for phase F-10a, the assemblage is characterised by many vessels decorated simply, either monochrome or bichrome (see fig. 8.2), a practice which characterises the LBA. In the same phase three Chocolate-on-White sherds were found, which might represent a higher level of investment of effort in pottery decoration (Gadot *et al.* 2006: 174).

Fortunately, an analysis focusing on bichrome pottery in Megiddo (Epstein 1966: 90-94) includes the publication of full loci contents from Houze Z. These floor deposits come from the last period of use of the house, deriving from the courtyard and two rooms and dating to the MB II-LB I transition (see Table 8.1). The contents of these houses seem impressive: not only is the quantity of decoration high, but around 19% of it is bichrome. It is problematic when there is only one small assemblage from the period and nothing to compare it to, since there is no way of knowing if this is exceptional or an accident of preservation. At the very least, it shows that such pottery contents could exist in houses from that period. There is still debate over the origins of Bichrome Ware and whether it was originally a Cypriot import. Megiddo is interesting in terms of this debate, because at least by visual inspection, the bichrome pottery looks different from the imported types (Artzy *et al.* 1978). Chemical analysis of samples showed a mixed origin, from eastern Cyprus and local clays. Local and imported Bichrome pottery could be distinguished by the coarseness of the fabric, the structure of the decoration, the vividness of the colours and the motifs themselves. This results in a note of caution in always treating bichrome pottery as a local product, or a homogeneous group, where such analyses have not been carried out.

Much more detailed information is available from LB IIB, the latest period published from the site, remains of which have been found in Area K, in phases K-7 and K-8, which correspond to Stratum V IIB of the early excavations and date to the 13th and early 12th centuries, going beyond the limits of this study but briefly presented here to maintain a sense of continuum and show the full range of change.

K-8 is earlier, but they are close in date and belong to the same stratum. This area has a domestic character, and it offered both a reliable stratigraphy and restorable assemblages (Martin 2013: 343-344). The more detailed information from this level allows us to look into not just the overall presence of decoration, but also associations of decoration with specific types, and therefore functions and contexts of use (Martin 2013: 367-370). Kraters (which make up 15% of the pottery assemblage and are the third most common shape on the site) are a particularly interesting example, because they can serve multiple functions according to their characteristics: the large ones are used for industrial purposes and short- and long-term storage, while the medium-sized kraters are tablewares. This second category is also the one most associated with decoration, monochrome or bichrome. Simple representational motifs, such as abbreviated versions of the palm tree, can be found on them. Storage jars can also be decorated, but the practice is more rare (Martin 2013: 374-378).

The other category of vessels which is consistently decorated are biconical jugs (Martin 2013: 387-388), which only make up a small part of the pottery assemblage (all jugs are 2% in K-8 and 5% in K-7) but the decoration on them is varied, produced individually to create unique vessels, which shows heavier investment. Like the medium-sized kraters, these are tablewares. Ovoid jugs, which are used for diverse, but less visible, functions (food preparation and transport, short-term storage) are less often decorated. It is interesting to note, in comparison with other categories of high status tableware which one might identify in the eastern Mediterranean, that although there is investment of effort in the creation of distinctive products, in Megiddo the decoration itself could often be classified as "simple geometric", based on combination of straight and wavy lines, keeping the overall elaboration rather low. This does not mean, however, that there are no examples of highly decorated serving vessels (especially biconical jugs) in the region.

Finally, from the same excavation phases and sections, percentages of decorated pottery are provided, both overall and broken down by type (Martin 2013: 396-397, see Table 8.2). Among sherds, 5% from level K-8 and 9% of level K-7 are decorated, while among complete vessels 15% from K-8 and 20% from level K-7 are decorated. We can draw two conclusions from this: decoration is potentially

underrepresented in the sherd assemblage,[10] but the difference in decoration between K-8 and K-7 remains in both measures (vessels and sherds). We also cannot attribute this different to a larger assemblage size, since the majority of the material originates from K-8. Caution is required, however, since the number of complete vessels is only 46 for K-8 and 15 for level K-7. If we associate elaboration with motifs beyond bands (using this only as a general indication, since the majority of them is actually likely to be simple) and bichromy, we can see that even using such a generous definition of elaboration, the percentage of elaborate decoration in the assemblage is under 1% for either phase. The publication characterises the low level of decoration as remarkable (although it does not specify what is it remarkable compared to) and attributes it to the utilitarian character and domestic setting, a potential indicator that the overall level of wealth, and therefore the potential for energy investment in pottery decoration and display is low (Martin 2013: 398). There are two further remarks we can make on the basis of this, which will remain relevant as this chapter progresses: one is that it is comparison which will show whether the situation is remarkable for the period or not and whether it can be attributed to poverty, and the other is that investment might be low, but as we have seen it is not absent, and it has associations with specific activities.

Martin (2013: 370; 387) introduces the interesting concept of certain shapes, such as necked kraters and biconical jugs, being "predestined for decoration". This suggests that for these types, the association with decoration is so strong as to be almost an identification, and even in its absence we can assume an intention for it to be used. The concept of predestination for decoration recalls, more specifically, the discussion on the integrality of the decorated object as a whole, as opposed to decoration as an addition. It is also possible to draw an initial connection between this and the association of elaborate decoration with specific clay pastes and production sequences in Cyprus, which is another potential indication of a separate conception of the decorated object.

Tel Aphek is interesting in comparison with Tel Megiddo, since similarities have been identified between the two, although Megiddo is considered to be closer to northern ceramic traditions (Beck 2000c: 243). For the MB IIA, decoration is

[10] As previously discussed. Also, it is notable that the disparity between the sherd assemblage and the vessel assemblage in bigger in level K-8, where storage jars make up more of the assemblage.

mentioned in association with storage jars, which are usually combed and sometimes pattern-combed, as well as using combinations of simple plastic and incised decoration. Simple geometric painted decoration is found on jugs and juglets, but the emphasis is on incised and combed designs, which are similar to those seen in other Levantine sites in the early second millennium (Beck 1985; 2000a: 116-129).

An indication of the strength of the presence of decoration can be seen in the only sufficiently large locus published from Area B (See Tables 8.3 and 8.4). Area A is divided in pre-Palace, Palace and post-Palace phases. In the pre-Palace phase, pottery is carefully produced and decoration is mostly applied or incised, as in Area B. Red slip and painted decoration are also in use. A distinct group is made up by medium-sized painted storage jars which have simple geometric decoration. The larger among these can be bichrome or polychrome (Beck 2000b: 174-180). There are unfortunately no self-contained loci published from that phase, but there are from the Palace phase, represented by floors from strata XIVb and a (see Tables 8.5-8.10). Two of the three presented include no decoration at all, although they show the increase in slipping and burnishing, and the third has only a small number of simply decorated vessels. At the same time, the quality of the manufacture is characterised as very high (2000b: 230). Since the issue of the comparison with Megiddo has been raised, an initial comparison with the general score of decoration for that phase (since there are no quantitative data for Megiddo for that period) shows that the conditions at Aphek are broadly comparative with the score of "2" assigned there. Also, it is likely that decoration is underrepresented in these deposits, since, according to Beck, more painted decoration was among the finds in earlier excavations on the site in terms of absolute volume, which can be used as a rough estimate even if we do not know the full details of the discard strategies in earlier excavations.

At Aphek, the phase following Palace I and before the construction of Palace II is represented in Area X (see fig. 8.3). The stratigraphic designations differ between the different Areas of the site, so the Palace sequence can be used for intra-site synchronisation, and the MB phases for inter-site. Decoration in this phase is characterised as similar to the previous one, which, as tables show, agrees in the predominance of relief/incised decoration. The tables also show that the percentage of decorated sherds is variable and can reach higher numbers than those seen so far (Yadin 2009: 119-127). Area X also offers data on the following phase, MB IIB, and Palaces III and IV, whose deposits included few well-preserved pottery assemblages.

However, there are some published loci, and according to those there is a marked decrease in decorated vessels in this phase (see Tables 8.11-14), a trend which is established in some sites of the region (Yadin 2009: 155-166).

In the LBA, some primary deposits have been discovered containing complete and restorable vessels, which were the focus on the publication and they were also used for the tabulation of the data here, as preferable to profiles. The primary deposits come from a pit containing an intentionally buried cache of objects in Stratum X14 (see tables 8.15-16 and fig. 8.4), a tomb beginning in X13 and remaining in use in X12 (see tables 8.17 and 8.18) and the remains of Palace VI (LB IIB), which contained destruction debris (see tables 8.19 and 8.20), some of which had fallen from the higher storey (Gadot 2009: 183-185). In this last phase, 35% of the assemblage is made up of Egyptian-style bowls, complementing the local types and likely in use by resident Egyptians (2009: 243; Martin *et al.* 2009: 377-381). The tomb has not been considered in terms of overall development, since it is a different kind of context, but it is important to note that in this funerary example more than half of the pottery is decorated, Mycenaean imports are included, and the vessels with geometric decoration are more than those with banded. As for the other two deposits, a direct comparison is not especially informative, since they do not succeed each other and we do not have an external frame of reference. We can use them, however, to infer that decoration seemed to have remained around the same rates in the LBA palaces, around 10% of the assemblage and that the rate of complex decoration is low (which agrees with the observation of Gadot that the most complex styles of decorated pottery, such as Bichrome, are almost absent in Aphek). From the LBA there is also evidence for pottery production on the site in the form of kilns, but unfortunately there is as yet no information associated with these.

In parallel with Megiddo, Aphek remains important late in the LBA, partly due to its position on the Bronze Age precursor of the Via Maris, which was central to trade, and therefore a point of interest for imperial Egypt. This is strongly documented by the presence of an Egyptian Governor's residence from the 13th century on the site, which expands in this phase and becomes the largest and most important settlement in the southern Sharon Plain (Kochavi 1990: IIX-XII). For this last phase there is very little information on pottery, and we know only that it includes Egyptian-type bowls as well as a small number of Cypriot and Mycenaean wares, the contexts of which on the site are unknown.

Tel Kabri is located in the north of Israel, and comparisons have been drawn between it, Tel Aphek and Megiddo. At the end of MB IIA the size of the site increased, an area of around 32 hectares was surrounded by a wall, and large scale landscaping operations were carried out on the interior of the mound. The development of international trading contacts played an important part in the changes on the site, which had links with the Syro-Anatolian region in the MB IIA and Cyprus later. It has been suggested that Kabri was the main commercial and administrative centre in the Akko Valley in the MB II. Unlike Aphek and Megiddo, however, the site does not have LBA levels, and was not of interest to Egypt at the time (Kempinski 2002: 451).

Decoration can be found across a range of shapes and types on Kabri. Incised lines and simple geometrical motifs are used in goblets and piriform jugs, as well as on Tel el-Yahudiyeh juglets, which are mostly found in tombs (see fig. 8.5). Painted decoration is also associated with a group of juglets (Kempinski *et al.* 2002: 111-115), the identification of which with known stylistic groups, such as Levantine Painted or Syro-Cilician, is open to discussion. This identification is less relevant here than the fact that distinctive painted decoration is present, and that it is associated with a specific shape. That attribution to closely defined Wares would be useful if it helped lead us to answers about whether this pottery is locally produced or imported, but that information is not available at present. The assemblage is characteristic of the period and has connections with sites along the coast, as well as Lebanon and Syria, as indicated by the juglets with painted decoration. The Cypriot connection is also strong, as can be shown by the presence of large quantities of pottery by the end of MB II B (Kempinski *et al.* 2002: 117-120). Unfortunately, for Tel Kabri we are mostly reliant on what general impression can be gained, since most of the larger published deposits come from collective burials in use over a long period of time.

The coastal Tel Mevorakh is interesting because all pottery deposits originate from temples in strata X and XI, offering the potential for information on an assemblage with cultic associations, potentially used in or resulting from special circumstances (Guz-Zilberstein 1984: 10). The site is a building, acting as a roadside sanctuary close to the sea, on the junction between the coastal road and the Sharon Plain. The site is interpreted as attached to neighbouring larger ones, Tel Burgah in the MBA and Tel Dor in the LBA. Stratum XI is the earliest and it dates to the 16th and mostly the 15th century BC, and Stratum X follows that (Stern 1984: 1-7; 40-44).

No quantitative information is available, but the information is offered that the assemblage is no different from contemporary finds in domestic contexts and that the majority of vessels are plain and undecorated, suggesting that no effort is made to enrich the cultic environment through the medium of decorated pottery. Some bichrome geometric decoration can be found on goblets and chalices (see fig. 8.6). The biconical jugs are also commonly decorated, as usual, but there is no indication of what percentage of the overall assemblage they represent. In Stratum XI there are also some standout examples of particularly elaborate or unusual representational decoration on a chalice and a bichrome goblet (see fig. 8.7).

Jezreel Valley

This group of sites broadly belongs in the coastal region, but their distinct characteristics are best understood when they are studied as a small separate cluster. The publication of the pottery from Tell Qashish includes different resolutions, depending on the quality of available data (Ben-Tor and Bonfil 2003: 185-257). From some phases only the "interesting" examples have been published, but Stratum IX C, dating in the MB IIA-MB IIB transition, has provided some floor assemblages which have been published in catalogue form, and can be used to extract data (see tables 8.21 and 8.22, fig. 8.8). In this phase, the finds of Tell Qashish come from an agglutinative building complex of domestic character. Stratum VII offers rich ceramic assemblages from the end of the MB IIB (see tables 8.23 and 8.24, see fig. 8.9). Occupation on the site continued in the LB I. The fortifications that previously existed went out of use and houses were built over them. Again, there are examples of some pottery assemblages from stone pavements (see tables 8.25 and 8.26). The assemblages offering the largest samples have been selected for presentation here, and there seems to be a trend for a decrease in decoration towards the end of the MBA, with fairly large amounts of it being present in early LB, including more examples that could be considered more complex. Whether this is an actual trend or if the smaller number of samples misleading is something I will return to once we can combine the observations from multiple sites and gain a wider impression of the overall tendencies in all of the southern Levant. The analysis of the typology in the publication confirms that the use of painted decoration is more common in the later phases (Bonfil 2003: 318) and it is mostly found on jugs and storage jars. Of

additional interest is the observation that the site is likely related to Yoq'neam (Ben-Tor *et al.* 2005: 1-2), giving the opportunity to make direct comparisons between their assemblages.

Yoq'neam has been published as part of the same series and covers all periods from MB IIA to the LBA in Areas A1 and A4. This site is considered, alongside Megiddo, one of the most important sites of the Jezreel valley (Ben-Tor *et al.* 2005: 3-7). Pottery material from floors of Stratum XXIVb, which dates to MB IIA, when the city is first walled, is characterised by the publication as representative of the stratum (Livneh 2005: 45) and is presented here (see Tables 8.27 and 8.28). An immediately visible difference from Tel Qashish is the stronger presence of monochrome slipped pottery, often in combination with burnishing. In the following Stratum, XXIVa, which dates to a later phase of the MB IIA, the technical quality of the pottery improves (Livneh 2005: 48). The majority of pottery from this period comes from a pit assemblage (see Tables 8.29 and 8.30). These two strata are characterised as the peak of decoration on the site, both in terms of quantity and in elaboration and variability (Livneh 2005: 52), while the next one, XIIIb is the point after which the quantity and quality of pottery decoration declines (see Tables 8.31 and 8.32 for an assemblage from the end of MB IIB). As the tables show, the decline in the numbers of decorated vessels seems to be supported by the published loci and it recalls the reduction in the percentage of decorated vessels towards the end of the MB IIB in Tel Qashish. Additionally, as the fill of the glacis in Area A 4, which is attributed to Stratum XIII, shows (Livneh 2005: 130-136), this process of reduction in decoration seems to be gradual (see Tables 8.33 and 8.34).

In ceramic terms, there is strong continuity from the end of the MBA to the beginning of the LBA in Yoqne'am, although there are significant changes in architecture and building orientation. A well-preserved floor assemblage has been published from Stratum XXb, in Area A1 dating to MB IIC/LB I (see Tables 8.35 and 8.36, see fig. 8.10). The assemblages are characterised in the publication as consisting mostly of plain undecorated ware (Ben-Ami 2005: 165). Yet the quantities of pottery published indicate that the presence of decoration is not low, and that it also includes indications of greater elaboration, such as Chocolate-on-White Ware (typically products of greater investment), bichromy and representational decoration. Ben-Ami states that decoration starts increasing again in the next Stratum, Xxa, which dates to the LB I proper (Ben-Ami 2005: 172), but perhaps the composition of this transitional

assemblage is an indication that the trend, if indeed it is a trend, has already begun reversing. Still, however, the increase of decoration in Xxa is striking (see Tables 8.37 and 8.38) and we can also observe that it is accompanied by an increase in bichromy[11] as well as the presence of securely stratified imports from Cyprus. Finally, after a hiatus in occupation, LB II is represented in the site by very plentiful ceramic deposits in Strata XIXb and XIXa (Ben-Ami 2005: 179-183), which both sustain similar and high rates of decoration, around 20% (see tables 8.39-42). Earlier in this section, we set up the questions of what is the relationship between the developments in Yoqne'am and Qashish, and how useful deposits such as these are in indicating trends. On the basis of the data (see Chart 8.1) it is possible to say confidently, that the course of pottery developments in the two sites is remarkably similar. This is important for two reasons. Firstly because it indicates that the trends seen in loci are reliable and, perhaps more importantly, because it shows that in two sites which are known from external sources of information to be related, the practices regarding pottery decoration are also similar, and they change in the same way through time. It would also be tempting to interpret the consistently lower percentages of decoration in Qashish (which however follow exactly the same trends) on the basis of the relationships suggested between the two sites, with Qashish being dependent, but that would perhaps be stretching the data.

Jordan Valley

Beth-Shean is located in the Jordan Valley, to the east of Megiddo. The main deposits of the second millennium start from late MB IIB (c.1650-1550/1500 BC), before which there is a break in occupation. In this period, Beth-Shean is a small, probably unfortified town (a feature which is atypical for the period), no more than 2 hectares in size. Despite that, a large, well-stratified, pottery assemblage comes from the site. In LB IA, a sequence of temples begins and throughout LB I the site remains small and not especially important. At some point from LB IB however, Egyptian presence is identified on the site, culminating at the presence of an Egyptian garrison from the 15th century (Mazar and Mullins 2007: 12-21).

11 The distinction needs to be clear between bichrome pottery, a term which I use to indicate the presence of one added colour in addition to the basic decoration, and capitalised Bichrome pottery, which is a stylistic characterisation of a specific ware.

Data for the MB II period are limited to general information, with occasional mention of quantities, not always easy to contextualise. Simple decoration (normally plastic or incised, rarely painted bands) is found on closed kraters, cooking pots, pithoi and rarely juglets (Maier 2007: 257-279). In general, most of the pottery is not decorated. The most distinctive and elaborate kinds of decoration (those referring to identifiable styles) are treated separately, giving us an idea about their scarcity. There are for example 18 sherds of Red, White and Blue Ware (see fig. 8.11) out of the 3,091 sherds that have been recovered from the MB II strata (2007: 286). Chocolate-on-White and White Ware (which are either the undecorated versions of Chocolate-on-White or the undecorated parts of painted vessels) are also rare, but more commonly found: 160 of these sherds were found in stratified contexts (around 5%). These become more common later in the period, establishing the appearance of the style before the LBA, and the possibility of its origin in the Jordan Valley, where the earliest examples are found (2007: 287-289).

Chocolate-on-White is a combination of decoration and surface treatment which can be found on open and closed shapes. These shapes can be constructed according to different technologies. The thick, visually impressive, white slip often conceals surface faults, showing an interest in appearance which results to some investment of effort, but not one which is sustained throughout the production process (in which case it would be apparent in all aspects of the vessel, such as more attention to shaping and firing, in order to avoid those surface faults). Apart from these wares, the presence of decoration is, as we have said, limited ("conspicuously lacking", in Maier's words [2007: 291]). At the same time, there is a clear impression of an increase in decoration from the earliest stratum, R-5, to the latest, R-3, towards the end of the MB IIB period (2007: 298). This increase can also be seen in the presence of Chocolate-on-White (see fig. 8.12), the main decorative style with more potential for elaboration, only seven sherds of which are found in R-5. It is interesting that this phase of lower emphasis on decoration is the same as the peak of local socioeconomic complexity in Canaan, which could have been accompanied by an increased demand for larger volumes of pottery and the resulting organisation of production in large scale urban workshops capable of mass production. It is difficult, however, at least in this case, to accept the characterisation of decoration as low, if Chocolate-on-White alone is found on 5% of all the sherds. Perhaps the decision was made to characterise it as such due to implicit assumptions about how much and how elaborate decoration

can be expected, but this percentage alone, and in comparison with practices elsewhere in the Southern Levant, does not support arguments for a conspicuous absence of decoration.

The increase in decoration we saw at the end of MB IIB becomes more pronounced in the LB, for which there are some rough quantitative data. Incised and relief decoration is now very rare, but painted decoration is found on around 15% of all LB sherds (Mullins 2007: 395), and we can also see how often this is encountered on different shape categories (see Table 8.43). As in other sites, biconical vessels are especially associated with decoration: as we said, the shape can be considered as essentially conceived as decorated, if it is an intended part of its appearance from the beginning. Conversely, the open shapes used in eating and drinking, which are in daily use, such as bowls and kraters, are the ones which are less associated with decoration. The quantity of decoration might be high, but its motifs remain simple, with bands and simple geometric predominating. Representational examples are occasionally found. Chocolate-on-White pottery is still present, making up 3.6% of all sherds in R-2 and decreasing to 1.3% in R-1 (2007: 398), but it would not be safe in this case to draw a direct analogy between the presence of this style and the elaborateness of decoration.

The particular association of Chocolate-on-White ware with the northern Jordan Valley led to attention being paid to fine wares in other sites in the same region and to tracking the production sources of these in order to correlate ceramic production of finewares and social complexity. The site of Pella was the focus of this research (Knapp 1989). Chemical analysis showed that Fine Wares were distinct from Plain wares and local clays in their composition, suggesting that at Pella, an important regional centre (covering an area of 7 hectares at the end of the MBA), part of the finer component of the pottery in use at the site is imported. Percentages of fine wares as well as decorated fine wares through time are provided for the site (see Table 8.44), and Knapp (1989) associates these with the cycles of sociopolitical rise and collapse. Based on this table, we can use the co-occurrence of distinctive decorative styles and fine fabrics as a rough indication of the complexity of decoration. I am not suggesting that every vessel and sherd included in these categories has complex motifs, but rather that their overall percentage and the rise and fall in that is a measure of the general investment of effort and interest in decorating pottery. This measure shows that overall (painted) decoration is roughly at the same level at the end of the MB and in

the LB I period, and it doubles in LB II, but complex decoration is definitely higher than any other period in LB I, and much lower in LB II. The same period, LB I, is when we see a peak in imported pottery.

Turning to social context, during the MBA peak of urban life there is also increased integration and interaction between sites, which come together as consumers and producers of ceramics, as we can see in the difference between Pella and Beth-Shean. This interaction could stimulate production and lead to greater investment in the creation of fine wares by specialised potters, and their adoption by urban communities. According to the model Knapp proposes, a peak should be seen somewhere in late MB/early LB I, before the 15th century and the campaigns of Tuthmosis III. In this time, Pella specifically could act as a gateway for the distribution of local fine pottery and imports from the Eastern Mediterranean (which would explain the percentages of Cypriot sherds). After this period, the integrated system stimulating production broke down and ceramic industries become more local and restricted. At the same time, the Egyptian presence could also result in stimulation of local, less integrated, systems of complexity and authority, on which an outside administration could be based. Having seen the ceramic data, and the proposed interpretation by Knapp, we can now set them aside and return to the bigger picture in the region, once more sites have been examined.

The Shephelah

Located to the south of Aphek is Tell Batash, where deposits from Area B cover the period from the end of MB II and all of the LBA (Panitz-Cohen 2006: 9). Petrographic and fabric analysis was carried out systematically on the site, which is useful for identifying the associations between different parts of the production sequence, from material selection and preparation to vessel finishing and decoration. It is this concern with fabric and the processes of production that permit the identification of specific associations between storage jars and painted decoration (2006: 73-85). In the MB, two different fabric types of medium and large storage jars carry banded decoration in different colours of paint, a separation which has not been interpreted. In the LB there is a very distinct decorated sub-category of storage jars (see fig. 8.13), which are on average smaller than the plain and transport ones and use

a different fabric than the rest, suggesting a different production sequence and conception from the beginning.

What is especially interesting when we compare this kind of production to other areas of the eastern Mediterranean where the practice of separate production sequences for decorated types have been identified, such as Cyprus, is that typically the painted decoration on the storage jars from Batash is simple, consisting of bands and perhaps a motif on the shoulder. They can be monochrome, bichrome or Chocolate-on-White. If the goal is the creation of a distinct product, standing out by its manufacture as well as its visual characteristics, then what is the purpose of under-emphasizing these distinctions on the visual side for most vessels? There are examples of exceptions, such as more complex representational motifs, though these are rare. At the same time, although complexity is low, diversity is high at the peak of this decorating practice in Stratum VIII, with individual motifs and combinations on every jar, so this might suggest that this level of decoration, in combination with the diversity of the decoration, was sufficient to demonstrate what was different about these vessels, and potentially even signal differences between them. These storage vessels were found in domestic, funerary and cultic contexts and there is no association with particular areas of the site.

A comparison with other sites in the southern Levant, and especially the Shephelah and the coastal regions, shows that this practice stands out in the context of the period, although it seems to be more common in the northern Levant. It is therefore possible that there is a relationship between the adoption of this feature at certain southern sites and the parallels and associations they wished to emphasize over others. It is also interesting that it is this functional category that is mostly associated with decoration, and not one of the serving and presentation types which presumably offer more opportunities for display. In the case of biconical vessels (see fig. 8.14), the type usually associated with decoration in multiple sites, there appears to be a more straightforward relationship with their use as tablewares (2006: 102-103). These are present in much smaller numbers than the storage jars, but interestingly, they are made from the same kind of distinctive fabric as them, drawing an association between production process and decoration which transcends shape. There are 19 restorable biconical vessels in total from the LB period, most of them dating to LB IB-IIA, 12 of which are decorated (a rate which is higher than any other shape category) and all of them having highly individual designs (2006:104-105).

The change in the percentage of decorated storage as part of the total of storage jars can act as a rough indication of trends through time: They first appear in small numbers in Stratum X (LB IA). In IX, 22% of all jars belong to this category, in VIII (LBIA-IIA, late 15th or early 14th century) they reach a peak at 26% and in VII (14th century) they slightly decrease again at 22%, essentially disappearing from the following stratum VI (from the end of 13th to beginning of 12th century) (2006:84-85). These changes parallel the general observations on decoration from the publication, according to which, in level VIII there is a relatively large amount of decorated pottery accompanied by a slight decrease in the quality of the manufacture, as measured by the lessened investment in surface finishing. Of the following stratum, however, it is stated that the painting remains meticulous, so there is some confusion in communicating the nature of the changes (2006: 129-131). Finally, it seems that there is a drop in the quantity of decoration in level VI, since between the two main decorated types, the storage jars are absent and the biconical vessels from this phase are all (atypically) undecorated. An indication of the actual numbers of decorated vessels present in specific loci can be gained for stratum VIII, from which some loci containing complete vessels were found in Building 475 (see tables 8.45 and 8.46). This, due to its size and construction, has been designated as a "patrician house", but according to the excavations, its contents, both the pottery and the non-ceramic contexts, fall fully into the range of an average LBA domestic assemblage, with no evidence for particular luxury (2006 191-193).

Lachish is one of the sites published in greatest detail from the southern Levant, since new investigations started on the site in 1973. These include strata from MB I, during which Lachish was part of the revival of urban culture and MB II, when the site becomes an important fortified regional centre with a palace, and site of central administration, located at the centre of the mound. It is estimated that this palace also controlled territories extending beyond the town itself and it has strong contacts with the coastal plain and trading partners beyond it, such as Cyprus (Ussishkin 2004: 54-56). The early part of the LBA is less well known and less densely settled. Starting from the LB IB, a lot of our data comes from the sequence of Fosse Temples and tombs in the LB II. In the 13th century the site was under Egyptian control and once again controlling a larger area. The site itself is one of the largest in the southern Levant in this period, as well as densely populated and rich in terms of material culture, which includes contacts (and pottery imports) with the rest of the

Eastern Mediterranean (2004: 57-63). Public architecture includes further temples as well as public buildings of uncertain function, such as the Pillared Building.

From MB I, published pottery deposits include finds from a poorly preserved cult building in Area D, which mostly consist of offering vessels (Singer-Avitz 2004: 900-202, see Tables 8.47 and 8.48). Contemporary finds from domestic Area P show once again that there are no major differences in the presence of decoration between these different kinds of contexts (although monochrome pottery is more common in the domestic assemblage). The pottery in use in cultic context was perhaps not especially selected compared to that of everyday use, neither with a view towards mass production nor for greater elaboration and emphasis (2004: 914, see Tables 8.49 and 8.50).

Area P has also contributed deposits dating to MB II, in levels 5 and 4 (17th century, see Tables 8.51-53). The decorated pottery in these levels includes Red, White and Blue Ware, a group which I previously discussed in the context of potential origins for Egyptian Blue Painted pottery. The most relevant aspects of this ware for the present questions however is that, despite the simplicity of its motifs, which are limited to linear decoration, the creation of a polychrome style which includes a colour very rarely used in pottery, suggests that there is interest in ceramics as a medium and experimentation with its potential in this period. It is most common in MB I and early MB II, while it disappears at the end of the MBA, when it has been suggested that it is replaced by other wares with potential for experimentation with visual effects, such as Chocolate-on-White and Bichrome (2004: 920-922). The last phase of the MB on Lachish in this area is P-3, where decorated pottery, both more elaborate and with monochrome motifs is more rare, following a trend that has already been observed in other areas (2004: 927).

Unfortunately, there is little information on the early LB phases on the site, and most of the sufficiently large published loci come from Area S (S-3, LB II, see Table 8.54), and Levels VIIA (LB III, see Table 8.55) and VI (LB III late, see Tables 8.56-57). What is interesting about these two phases (apart from the difference between S-3, where the assemblage consists mostly of sherds and VIIA/ VI which contained many complete vessels in situ) is that they are associated with the period of the revival of the site and the strongest Egyptian presence on it. Is therefore the potential increase (and high quantity, exceeding 15%) of decoration associated with

this new breath of urbanism on the site, and how atypical is this development for the region?

There is a general consensus for the southern Levant that the quality of material culture declines in the LBA as the urban structures of the MBA break down, and this is accompanied by similar changes in pottery, with less investment on all stages of production, from the preparation of the fabric to shaping, forming, firing and surface treatments. This development is especially visible in smaller towns, such as Jericho, but is somewhat arrested in larger centres where there is a higher standard of elite life, often supported by an Egyptian presence, as in Lachish which stands out in the period with the richness of its pottery deposits (Bienkowski 1986: 150-152). If the proposed scheme is true, we would expect the pattern of pottery decoration to more or less follow that of urban life and the accompanying complexity, with the pattern diverging in the Late Bronze Age: falling off in some sites, while continuing in others, especially when outside interventions help maintain a higher level of local material complexity. This would also agree with the model proposed by Knapp for Pella. Moreover, if this is confirmed, we can perhaps assume that the sustaining of higher internal social complexity enables the maintenance or continuing development of distinct local trajectories rather than the adoption of imported (specifically Egyptian) patterns of uniform and undecorated material culture, directed from an external centre. This is a pattern that we can easily compare with what we have seen in the deposits so far, and it is immediately visible that the situation on the ground is far more complicated than this, as pulling all the threads together in the final discussion will show.

Smaller sites

Zahrat adh-Dhra' 1 is one of few settlements dating to MB II in the southern part of the southern Levant (the site is situated in southern Jordan), and it was abandoned at the end of the period, allowing not only the addition of a new region, a more isolated rural site with a precise chronological identification, but also the study of social and material circumstances preceding abandonment (Berelov 2006: 2). Additionally, the pottery from the site has been published with a view to targeting social questions through a quantitative study of the material. Unfortunately, although the analysis is

sophisticated, it focuses on shape categories as an indication of function, and decoration is not quantitatively approached. The site is large, with surface remains from the MB II covering an area of 12 ha (Berelov 2006: 21), but the area is divided by a wadi, so it is reasonable to assume that occupation was not continuous. The total assemblage from the site numbers to 5,500 sherds, allowing for a full recording and quantification of the material (Berelov 2006: 58-60) and Estimated Vessel Equivalents on the basis of vessel profiles and surface area was used in the publication for quantification.

Cooking pots (58%) and plain storage jars (37%) completely dominated the assemblage, while smaller shapes, both open and closed, are poorly represented (6% of the total assemblage, estimated on the basis of sherd counts and surface area vessel equivalents (Berelov 2006: 98, 135). Locally produced pottery is exclusively handmade, and careful curation of the wheel-thrown examples indicates that they might have been harder to replace, and therefore imported (2006: 195). It is unclear whether the "plainness" of the storage jars refers to the absence of surface treatments, such as slipping or burnishing, since previously in the analysis of typology it is stated that jars are frequently combed or incised. Cooking pots are often decorated with rope-mouldings (2006: 69-72). The lack of smaller shapes can be interpreted partly as a result of the gradual, planned abandonment of the site which allowed the removal of the most portable (and perhaps valuable) items.

Berelov also suggests (2006: 101) that the absence of bowls could indicate that the cooking pots themselves were used as communal serving vessels, as well as in food preparation. Firstly, it is very likely that a complete absence of bowls indicates that they must have been rare even when the pottery inventory was complete and in use: otherwise, we would have expected at least some to survive due to discard before abandonment. Secondly, it is interesting to view this suggestion of the use of cooking pots as serving vessels in association with the practice of decorating the type, and at least wonder if there is a relation between the two. Comparison between the different structures in the site shows that there are no differences either in behaviour at the period of use, or surrounding discard and abandonment (2006: 179). To summarise, the assemblage is characterised as "basic utilitarian" and the focus on incision, continuing from the EBA, rather than painted traditions of decoration which are in use in parts of the Southern Levant is considered an indication of the relative isolation of the site from the ceramic world of the MB II. It seems very likely that incisions and

mouldings were present as very simple decoration on many of the vessels, many of which were used and shared in a communal setting.

Smaller sites, even when schematically published, can offer crucial information on their place in the network of political relationships of control and interaction through time and the changes in this network, permitting connections to be drawn between relationships of control and independence and similarities and divergences in ceramic trajectories. Such an example is Tell el-Hayyat, in Jordan, which has been studied with a focus on assessing its economic independence and the implications of that for the understanding of rural sites (Falconer and Belerov 2006: 44-61; 118-123). The main phases studied are 5 to 3, covering the MB IIA to MB IIB periods. Decoration is extremely rare in Phase 5 (Falconer *et al*. 1984). Phase 4, at the end of the MB IIA period, is the most similar to contemporary sites, and perhaps also the one showing the highest rates of decoration, which is indicated by the frequency of bands on small open, small closed and medium closed shapes (Falconer *et al.* 1984), ribbing and rilling on small and medium open shapes and thumb-impressed decoration on handmade cooking pots, a practice which could be associated with smaller sites (see fig. 8.15). This shows that in these phases a variety of vessels with different functions were decorated, the vast majority very simply, with a probable decrease in the following one.

Another change through time is the decrease in storage jars and the increase in serving vessels, but it is when we relate these shifts to production that an interesting pattern emerges: Neutron Activation Analysis showed increased manufacture of tablewares in phase 3 on the site, as well as increased exchange of manufactured goods with urban communities. At the same time, in the manufacture of storage jars there seems to be an increase in the interest for local storage, and less in the creation of containers for export. If we combine this information with a comparison of the trends we have seen so far in the southern Levant, we can arrive at a broad understanding on the place of more distant, but not isolated, places: Tell el-Hayyat follows more or less similar paths to larger sites, which include the direct acquisition of material. On the one hand, imported material could stimulate local production, or fit with already existing areas of interest defined by the increase of the same types (tablewares in this case) in local production (it is impossible to establish a chronological relationship between these two). On the other hand, there appears to be local control of the kind and scale of relationships the residents of Tell el-Hayyat were

interested in (Falconer 1995). To understand therefore the full picture of ceramic production in the southern Levant, we have to incorporate the multiple components that constituted it, including self-sufficient and self-directed rural production, which could enter in feedback relationships with bigger production centres (Falconer 1994: 121-139).

North of the Sea of Galilee

Ending the study of the southern Levant at the northern part of the region, there are some interesting data to extract from Hazor. Most of the excavations were published earlier in the 20th century and are not well-suited to answering the kind of questions posed here. The latest volume (Garfinkel and Greenberg 1997: 198-211) has a more up-to-date level of information, giving a sequence of data from MB IIB (see Tables 8.58 and 8.59), MB IIC (see Tables 8.60 and 8.61) and LB I (see Tables 8.62 and 8.63). The first one is a floor and the following two pits, giving large enough assemblages, which additionally can be considered as self-contained units. The most interesting element, and the reason I relied on the presentation of the data in tables with no further commentary is the remark that there remains, despite the overall variation, a consistent pattern through large parts of the southern Levant of a decrease in pottery decoration in MB IIB, which is followed by an increase in the beginning of the LB I. I have already mentioned the potential problems of the data from loci, but even if the individual data are weak, correspondence between them suggests that the pattern is secure.

Attempts have also been made, using the material from Hazor, to apply the lessons and potential of the vast literature and theoretical studies on feasting to the southern Levant. Pottery plays a part in it, being identified as one of the potential signs of feasting activities through the proportions of surface treatments, shapes and functions of the vessels that are present in an assemblage (Zuckerman 2007). A potential arena for feasts in Hazor was the Orthostats Temple, which starts from the MBA and continues throughout the LBA, and whose supporting installations include a pottery kiln. The emphasis in the pottery assemblage is in cooking and open serving vessels, while closed vessels of all sizes are rarer. There are also examples of many types identified as cultic. Given the absence of liquid storage and pouring vessels, it seems that in this context, the emphasis is on the consumption of solid foods. The

same emphasis on the serving and consumption of dry foods can also be seen in the pottery assemblage of Ceremonial Precinct in Area A, where 70% of the restorable vessels belong to that category.

In both contexts there is less emphasis in the elaboration of form and decoration — there are no differences between these vessels and the ones found in everyday contexts of use in terms of appearance, which parallels the situation at cultic contexts, such as Mevorakh. If this pottery was distinguished in any way, it would have been a result of the context of use, or perhaps the process of production, if that was a part of the preparation for the feast. There also appears to be a connection of feasts with a cultic and religious context. If feasting is seen as an opportunity for display and renegotiation of social identities, for the southern Levant in general and Hazor in particular, it does not seem that decorated pottery had a big part to play in these events.

The northern Levant

Qatna is one of the main centres in Syria, and the capital of a regional kingdom in the MBA. It is therefore frustrating that the detailed ceramic information on the site is so limited, because there are features that make its study essential. We know that a restructuring of the upper town in the MBA includes the establishment of large-scale pottery production on the top of the central hill (Bonacossi 2007: 73). This goes against the common assumption that industrial operations, such as large scale pottery production, were usually relegated to the edges of settled areas, and physically emphasizes the literal centrality of the activity. The centre included multiple workshops, fast wheels and large and technologically diversified kilns. Next to the pottery production area there is a monumental building which has not been well preserved but could have been associated with the control and administration of the production centre. Knowing something this important about production on the site, it is especially unfortunate that we know so little, in systematic terms, of the products and their characteristics. The pottery workshop expands in the LBA (2007: 76) and even incorporates the nearby public building. At the same period, the upper town was dedicated to palatial and administrational functions, with no evidence for domestic housing (2007: 81). When these public buildings were destroyed in the mid-14th

century, it is a testimony to the importance of the local industry that the pottery workshop did not stop existing and producing but migrated to the south of the Royal Palace, and was only abandoned in LBA II after a millennium of operation.

Overviews and stylistic studies of the pottery of Qatna and the other Syrian states have already raised the question of whether, and how, historical events (and therefore social shifts and changes in structure) influenced common material culture (Iamoni 2012: 32-33). These studies, however, have missed crucial opportunities in engaging with the material: the focus being on pottery in "common" use, painted pottery was only marginally considered. This creates the illusion of deeper interest in the material of everyday life, which has been so far neglected for the sake of the exceptional and decorated. In fact, however, it ignores the painted component of Simple Pottery, not all of which is fine and imported, and creates an unnecessary division between everyday painted pottery and the pottery that has for some reason been recognised as a distinct painted ware and studied separately, as discussed in Chapter 4. This hinders the integration of the material in its context of use and the understanding of the full range of negotiation in material culture, as well as excluding a potentially sensitive indicator of shifts. The findings of these studies still need to be considered, despite the mismatch in goals, being some of the newest data available, and even including information on late MBA and early LBA contexts from the pottery production area discussed above and extensive fills from the Lower City Palace (2012: 97).

According to this analysis, in the MB II (1800-1600) 60% of the decoration present is combed incision, and the rest is grooving, ridges and simple incisions (see fig. 8.16). The use of paint is very rare, suggesting, according to Iamoni (2012: 122) that the products of the workshop were exclusively simple ware. This would correspond to the impression of emphasis on mass production given by the scale of the industry, but at the same time it would be very interesting to know what part of this simple production was decorated, even in a way that requires minimal investment. Another reason for the high frequency of this type of decoration is the high number of closed storage vessels in operation J, where most of the data comes from, and the common association between shape and decoration. The frequency of incision could also be related to production and its orientation. Different kinds of pottery are found in different kinds of context in the same period. In Operation T, which covers contexts in the Eastern Palace (2012: 123), painted decoration is still rare (see fig. 8.17), but

starts increasing towards the end of the MBA period, with the use of dark motifs and the appearance of some North Syrian/Cilician Painted Ware. Again, we are hindered by the lack of quantitative information, but it is an indication of ceramic distinction between large-scale production and elite contexts, and a greater interest for more elaborate painted decoration in the latter.

In the LBA, combed/incised decoration remains the most common type, although less overwhelmingly. Painted pottery increases, although it never reaches the percentages of the most common incised ways of decoration. The motifs are mostly simple geometric, with the occasional complex examples, all usually executed in monochrome. In LB II (1400-1200) bichrome red and black painted decoration is used, some of it for complex motifs (2012: 138-139). Painted decoration is mostly found on open shapes, those associated with serving and presentation of food. There is also imported pottery covering a range of the common eastern Mediterranean exports, such as White Painted, White Slipped and Base Ring from Cyprus, Mycenanean in LHIIIA2/b from the Aegean and Khabur ware and imitations of Mitanni bowls from the East, but no impression is offered of how commonly these are encountered in the assemblage. The cumulative impression from the data therefore is that there is a likely increase in the complexity of decoration in the LBA phases of the site, indicated by the higher frequencies of the more elaborate painted style, and that this is accompanied by interest in the acquisition of foreign pottery types.

Tel Mardikh/Ebla is another very important site in central-west Syria, where the development of the ceramics through time has been presented and related to the stratigraphic of the site by Nigro, often on the basis of data from recent work on the site (Nigro 1998: 271), a study which has also been used as the basis for further research, mostly focusing on the MBA data, since the LB pottery was only recently studied (Iamoni 2012:40). The site is known for its strong stratigraphic sequence, which makes it useful for the study of typological and chronological developments, but the age of the published excavations limits the quantitative information which is available for each stratum. This combination of lack of quantitative information with a strong sequence and extensive descriptions of the development of ceramic characteristics, both by Matthiae and by Nigro, is methodologically interesting.

We know that Mardikh IIIA (which corresponds to MB I, 2000-1800), a phase of economic importance and cultural prestige for the site, pre-dates the incorporation of the city in the kingdom of Yamkhad (Matthiae 1980: 112-114). There are parallels

between this phase in Ebla and the coastal Palestinian areas, as well as inland Syria (1980: 145-146). Nigro (1998: 272-274) divides the painted assemblage into Common (which includes bands and simple geometric motifs) and NS/CPW, which occasionally includes representational motifs and is distinct from Levantine Painted Ware. Both are considered part of what Nigro calls "the revival of painted ware" in the middle of the MB, which continued until the LB. Painted decoration is especially associated with pouring shapes and carinated bowls, and it is more common in funerary than domestic contexts, drawing a distinction between decorated pottery and the practice of daily life, at the same time as it introduces the potential for the decoration to serve as one of the markers of this kind of distinction, and of the consumption in the context of exceptional circumstances, such as funerary vessels. It also differs from practices we have seen in some areas of the southern Levant, where the decorative emphasis was directed towards medium-sized transport and storage vessels, while occasions of communal consumption were not used as an opportunity to employ decorated vessels for emphasizing distinctions.

MB IB (1900-1800) in particular is considered the peak period for painted pottery, with the most elaborate styles originating from the Mardikh/Aleppo (Nigro 2002b: 107). In terms of social and historical developments, this is associated with the formation of stronger state entities in the same regions. Moreover, Nigro maintains that the simple/elaborate division in the MB IB is not merely for the purposes of study, but an actual feature of the assemblage (1998: 287). It we accept this, it leads to the conclusion that this is not only a peak phase for the practice of pottery painting, not only of peak investment in pottery with the creation of the more elaborate NS/CPW, but also the peak of distinctions drawn through the decoration of pottery – an investment in the material of clay, which becomes a means for investing in the potential for drawing distinctions through material culture.

Beyond painting, another feature which is associated with this period of pottery elaboration is the development of types displaying metallic inspiration, such as Red Burnished and Black Burnished (Nigro 2003: 349-355). Even though these types do not strictly fit into the definition of decoration I have adopted, it is clear that they are involved with it as part of the same practice of manipulating clay to achieve a range of effects, and they associate the imitation of other materials in pottery with periods when more investment in pottery can also be seen in the higher rates of decoration. This discussion of the process of the "revival of painted pottery" in the

context of the whole of the Levant raises the subject of the parallels between the development of the two areas. From the South there is sufficient data to follow changes in sites through time, and also identify when these represent a wider trend. If that trend is placed in parallel to the northern Levantine changes that (according to Nigro) Ebla represents, what do we see? This question will be addressed in the discussion, at the end of the chapter.

Mardikh IIIB dates to MB II (1800-1600), after which the site is destroyed, and in terms of ceramic production there is a tendency towards greater standardisation and an orientation towards fast production of greater amounts of pottery in coarser fabrics (1998: 282). The Common Painted Ware continues, with more standardised motifs and it is associated with the same kinds of shapes, especially pouring, while the more elaborate North-Syrian/Cilician Painted Ware decreases. In this period, the wares imitating metallic vessels change, with the shapes being adopted by Simple Ware, but the investment in the creation of metal-like properties in the feel and appearance of the vessel ceases (Nigro 2003: 353).

Tell Bi'a/Tuttul, near the Euphrates, is one of the easternmost sites included in this study. As an inland site, it provides an interesting point of comparison with the palatial centres closer to the Mediterranean. At the same time, we can locate the site in the Mari area of influence, providing a second, more specific, point of comparison. This comparison can help answer the question of how the northern Levant should be conceived of in this period, and whether there are overall trends that might extend beyond the area of study. The site assemblage, around 15,000 sherds, is divided in seven ceramic complexes (KK), which correspond to chronological and stratigraphical divisions. KK 1 starts from before the construction of the Palace and KK 7 covers its latest period of use (Einwag 1998: 52-56). KK 1 dates to the EBA, but starting from the following period, MBA types start appearing. The use of the palace in the period of Yasmah-Adad dates KK 7 to the early 18th century (Einwag 1998: 75-92).

Overall percentages of decorated pottery are supplied by the publication and these are accompanied by an analysis of the treatments used and their changes through time (Einwag 1998: 64- 74). Even though KK 1 is in the EBA, it is interesting to note the enormous increase of decoration from that period to the next, and the continuing sustainment of the percentage of decoration around 15% after KK2 (see Table 8.64, figs. 8.18 and 8.19), or 13% if we account for the fact that monochrome

slipped surfaces were included in the "decorated" category and exclude those. It is also interesting that not only is there a change in the quantity, but also the composition of the decoration, with incision/plastic decoration dramatically overtaking surface treatments. Incision or application is usually found on the shoulder of closed shapes. Incision is by far the most common, found on around 10% of all vessels after KK 2. Most of this incision is combed or grooved, and complex motifs are very rare. An exceptional example from KK 7 stands out, with complex incised and puncture decoration resembling that of Tell el-Yahudiyeh ware (1998: 68).

The frequency of incised decoration resembles the same period in other sites, closer to the core area of study, such as Qatna. However, the strong regional traditions seen in painted decoration warn that the similarities might be superficial, and this might in fact be a different ceramic world. Painted decoration is exceptional, and in most cases it is considered to be imported. There is also a distinctive local practice of decorating through bitumen coating ("Bitumen Ware"). This can take the form of simple geometric motifs, a decoration similar to splash and dribble, or a dipped rim band, and it makes up around 2% of all pottery. This is specifically associated with storage vessels, and Einwag suggests that it might have been a way to mark this specific category. The overall conclusion, before drawing any parallels with other areas, is that decoration is present but simple, and that since the establishment of the palace it remains remarkably constant, even across assemblages where different kinds of contexts predominate (for example KK 5 mostly originates from funerary deposits). Another significant difference from the sites closer to the Mediterranean is an absence of the very important distinction between more and less elaborate styles of painting, related to the general low numbers of painted pottery. Even though there is a differentiated social structure, as clearly demonstrated by the palace, in this easternmost part of the northern Levantine kingdoms there is little interest in pottery as part of an elite way of life. All this leads to the conclusion that, on the basis of the practices surrounding pottery, there are distinctions between the northern Levant and the eastern parts of Syria, reflecting differences in the terms of negotiating social life.

The data, as I have warned, is heavily skewed in favour of the southern Levant due to a bias in publication, but there are further sites about which there is information from preliminary publications, and which can be used to flesh out more the amount of available data as well as add more variety to the types of sites I have included in the study. Such a limited publication from Syria is Area H, from Tell Hadidi (Dornemann

1981), which includes a domestic pottery assemblage dating to the second half of the 16th century. The building was destroyed by fire, sealing inside primary deposits of the equipment in use at the time (see Table 8.65). The most commonly encountered type of decoration is comb incision on storage jars, around ¾ of which are decorated (see fig. 8.20). Simple painted banded and linear decoration is also used on jugs and medium-sized jars.

Umm-el Marra in the Jabbul Plain is another such site, a smaller centre than the ones we have seen so far (2.5 hectares) and a part of the kingdom of Aleppo in the Middle Bronze Age (Curvers *et al.* 1997), situated on the route connecting Aleppo to Mesopotamia. The MBA is similar to the nearby large Syrian centres, some of which we have seen already, such as Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Hama and Alalakh, and the decoration is simple. Combed-incised decoration is encountered frequently, and painted decoration consists mostly of bands (Schwartz *et al.* 2000, see fig. 8.21). It also includes more elaborate examples of the finer decorated styles, such as Syro-Cilician (the ware Nigro called NS/CPW in Ebla). The early LB pottery from the site resembles in its characteristics that found on sites on the Euphrates, and it also includes Nuzi ware and WS II bowls, showing that elaborate pottery is available in this period, and so are imports from the west and the east.

This change in material alignment is interesting, because it looks as if the characteristics of pottery are aligning themselves to the larger dominant political forces of each period: the Aleppo kingdom in the MBA and the Mitannian empire in the LBA. Elite artifacts on the site are rare, and they are perhaps restricted to the limited presence of the most complex ceramics we have already seen (Schwartz *et al.* 2000). In this case, these ceramic styles could be a way for the limited, rural, elites of the site to align themselves with the dominant elite cultures and participate as members of that community, using the only means available to them to achieve that: pottery, rather than materials of higher intrinsic value.

It is interesting to compare this site with the smaller examples we have seen from the southern Levant, such as Tell el-Hayyat: in that case, there was an impression of independence, and an exchange of ceramic influence with the larger surrounding centres that appeared to be more selective and on rather equal terms. It is likely that the difference we see between the ceramic assemblages of the two sites is the material expression of existing in different sociopolitical environments, one in the larger, more regulated states of the North, and the other part of a looser articulation

and integration of sites in a network of city states. It is unfortunate that a more quantitative expression of these differences is not available, which would make the examination of hypotheses much more rigorous.

A detour to the east: Nuzi Ware

I have described the general characteristics of Nuzi ware in Chapter 4, and these will only be repeated here briefly, with the purpose delving deeper into the place and study of this style. Nuzi ware is identified with fine fabrics and elaborate White-on-Dark decoration. Interestingly, early treatments of the ware draw a distinction between two kinds of fabric, one fine and one coarser, the latter used to create vessels with thicker walls, fired at lower temperatures and with the painted decoration flaking off, even if it is elaborate. According to Hrouda (1957: 12) these should not be classified with the "examples of fine art". The existence of this coarser group on the one hand and its dismissal on the other raise serious questions about what the modern perception of Nuzi ware has inherited, and how accurate is our view even of the limited information that we do have about it. For example, have fragments of it been too strongly distinguished from their assemblages and ceramic traditions (and yet not counted) and lifted above the remainder of the pottery, ignoring evidence that they might form part of a continuum?

Alalakh/Tell Atchana is, from the Levantine and Mediterranean perspective, the most central site for discussing the presence and role of Nuzi ware and its appearance in the western parts of the Mitannian sphere of influence (see fig. 8.23). The quantitative aspect of this discussion is very limited, as is the case for Nuzi Ware in general. Data from Woolley's excavations give the number of sherds found, since these stand out so strongly against the rest of the pottery on the site. Not knowing the full size of the assemblage it is not possible to evaluate them, but they give an idea about the scarcity: there are 25 sherds in Woolley's level IV and 40 in level II (characterised by Sumaka'i as "abundant", 2010: 102), which dates to the first half of the 14th century, when they reach the peak of their presence. These are found in elite houses (which does not mean that they are not present in other social context, since the emphasis in excavation was placed in elite contexts), the streets between them and in graves.

Since decoration is often emphasized instead of technology and manufacture, it has been difficult until recently to identify to which manufacturing tradition the distinctive kind of Nuzi Ware found on the site (sometimes called Atchana Ware) belongs, and what the implications of that are. It has been observed that, in terms of decoration, the Alalakh finds differ from the Nuzi Ware found in the Mitanni heartland, for example by showing a greater preference for schematic floral motifs (Pfälzner 2007: 248-249). The closest to a final answer so far has been given by chemical and mineralongical analyses of Nuzi ware from Alalakh and other sites covering the West to East span of the ware's distribution (Erb-Satullo *et al.* 2011). These showed that in Nuzi itself the pastes of Nuzi ware are indistinguishable from those of other fineware. In Alalakh, intriguingly, the composition of Nuzi ware was completely different from that from other sites, but consistent with the mineralogy of Simple Ware at the site. Chemical analysis confirmed the clear differentiation between Nuzi ware at Nuzi and at Alalakh. Based on this evidence, it is clear that Nuzi ware can have multiple centres of production, including local manufacture, if not at Alalakh itself, then somewhere within the Orontes catchment area. A related question is not only the physical origin of the vessels, but also the origin of the concept of this elaborate decoration. Mallowan saw Cretan influences in the elaborate light-coloured designs, while Woolley argued for a connection of the dark and white aesthetic effects with the practice of decorating dark coloured pottery with white-paste filled incisions, bringing the origins back to the east (Hrouda 1957: 18).

If a relationship is assumed between Nuzi Ware and Aegean styles, then a site like Alalakh, with connections to the Aegean worlds, could have played a crucial role in the ware's development. This leads to the question: if Alalakh was involved in any way in the development of Nuzi Ware, should there are also be evidence of early and intermediate phases of the style on the site, which is lacking at present? Arguments for importation of the ware (which are contradicted by chemical analysis) include its sudden disappearance, which could indicate a hindrance in acquiring it from the usual (external) sources after the Hittite conquest of the Mitanni production centres (Sumaka'i 2010: 102-112), and the possibility that it was replaced by a different kind of fine tableware of foreign origin, Mycenaean, which filled the same niche. Additionally, continuing the "argument from decoration" it has been suggested that the evidence for change in the motifs and decoration of the ware through time in

Alalakh is minimal, which contradicts what would be expected from a production centre, although there is no supporting evidence for that expectation.

In general, the recent study of pottery in Alalakh has so far been focused on understanding the modern sequence and relating it to the one derived from Woolley's excavations rather than on providing quantitative information (Mullins 2010: 51). However, some of the recent publications provide badly needed hints of Nuzi pottery in context. For example, the study of pottery in domestic contexts, Buildings A, B and C in Area 2 included Nuzi ware footed goblets with White-on-Dark decoration, as well as beakers in the same ware. A potentially relevant piece of information is that both these shapes, the footed goblets and the beakers, exist both in Nuzi Ware and in other plain and simply decorated varieties. This is interesting, because it means that, even though we do not really know how much of each there is, we do know that simple and more complex versions of the same shape (and therefore presumably the same functional category) co-existed side by side, and were used in the same context (Mullins 2010: 57-59). What we cannot know without information on relative quantities and contextual details, is whether there is a pattern of juxtaposition of those shapes or if they coexist in a different manner, for example as alternatives to one another. In terms of dating, none of these deposits are later than the end of the 14th century.

Another area where the understanding of Nuzi ware is improving, despite the lack of quantitative data, concerns its origin, mostly as a result of working more closely with stratigraphic data from recent excavations (Soldi 2008: 245), rather than relying on assumptions about which potential influences most resembles Nuzi ware. Most of the new data comes from the core of the Mitanni state around the Khabur, which is beyond the limits of this study, but the conclusions are relevant both to the understanding of the place of Nuzi ware in the Levant and, more importantly, to the wider question of the practice of decorating pottery. There still is no detailed series showing the sequence of evolution of Nuzi Ware, even at its core sites, and the possibility for transitional types between Nuzi Ware and Khabur Ware, the preceding style of decorated pottery, is still under examination (Bretschneider 1997; Oates *et al.* 1997: 68). What is clear, however, from the sequence in multiple sites is that the appearance of Nuzi ware is preceded by strata characterised by an increase in the quantity of decorated pottery, especially the relative percentage of painted beakers and grain measures (which are typical of the Khabur area). This has been observed at

Tell el-Rimah, Tell Brak, Tell Mohammed Diyab and other currently studied sites in the area (2008: 247-250, see fig. 8.24). These early stages, just before the appearance of Nuzi ware, show a wide range of experimentation with potential shapes, motifs, their interaction as well as a change in taste, with the acceptance and promotion of pottery as a material suitable for decoration.

This observation is relevant to how we conceive of a style that seemingly stands out as much as Nuzi Ware does. It might initially seem as if the development of this highly decorated style was an isolated event, without any preceding stages leading up to this goal, but from the perspective of changes as they happened, we see instead that there was a general phase of interest in decoration, of a development of conceptual familiarity with the idea of manipulating pottery as a material, which is followed by experimentation. Nuzi Ware was one of the many possible outcomes of this process. It is also, if we follow the hints about a coarser and less technologically sophisticated component of the same style, more diverse than the focus on the finest and most elaborate examples would lead us to believe. Finally, this new understanding becomes especially useful when compared to what we know about another elaborate style which seemingly appears out of nowhere: New Kingdom Blue Painted pottery. Joining the two together, we can see an emerging theme of the potential for creation of elaborate styles in highly complex social contexts and the paths this can take.

Pottery, trade and connections

In the introduction I identified the Levant as significant, since it is closely interconnected with all other areas. In terms of pottery, it receives material from Cyprus and the Aegean through trade, while the nature of contacts with Egypt is very different, especially in the southern Levant, where the presence of Egyptians means that whole units of culture are transplanted. Setting this different process aside, we can study the Levant's relationships with the regions whose pottery was involved in trade. Starting from the MBA, Aegean presence is minor and incidental, in terms of ceramics. There is very little evidence for systematic imports and contacts with the Aegean in the MBA, and specifically with Crete. Overall, no more than 50 MM

vessels at a recent estimate (Dothan *et al.* 2000) have been found, in the northern Levant mostly at sites on the Syrian coast, such as Ugarit and Byblos, with the inland exception of Qatna.

In the south, Kamares ware has been identified in MBA Hazor, another inland site, likely arriving via Syria (Daviau 1993: 73-79). Despite the lack of ceramic interest however, (Knapp 1993b; Rehak and Younger 1998), there are different ways in which Crete and the Levant, particularly Syria, appear to connect, especially during LM I (which overlaps with the northern Levantine LB I). These focus primarily on metals, especially tin, and were mostly carried out through a sequence of intermediate harbours along the eastern route connecting Crete and the Levantine coast via the Dodecanese. They are visible in other areas of interaction such as Aegean-type art at Qatna, Alalakh and Kabri (Cline *et al.* 2011).

The LBA Mycenaean ceramic presence on the other hand is much more visible as well as, as discussed in Chapter 4, more intentional, involving vessels specifically manufactured for the export market. This visibility, however, needs to be nuanced and measured against the presence of local pottery and other imports. For example, the quantities quoted from Tel Aphek are considered typical (Guzowska and Yasur-Landau 2009: 354-358): The complete assemblage of imported Mycenaean pottery is made up of 53 vessels, 43 closed and 10 open, only 2 of which are restorable (0.5% of the restorable vessels at Aphek), dating mostly to LH IIIA2-B1. The open shapes are associated with the elite residential area, and perhaps with more exclusive ways of drinking and display. The LB IIB levels at Megiddo (K-8 and K-7), where the best quality of information on the period comes from, contain 25 vessels and sherds imported from Cyprus and the Aegean, five Mycenaean and the remainder Cypriot (Yasur-Landau, 2013: 458-463).

The Cypriot pottery trade was discussed in the previous chapter, but now it can be approached from the opposite point of view. At most sites, BR and WS make up the majority of imports and they are usually found at equal quantities. At Tell Mevorakh (Kromholz, 1984: 16-20) Monochrome is the most common type, represented by a jar and a minimum of 26 bowls, and Base Ring I and II are the two following types, whose numbers are more difficult to estimate due to fragmentation. White Slip II is almost equally common, represented by 20 bowls and a tankard. The relationships are more intense in LC I and early LC IIA, as can be seen by the wares represented, with a decline later in LC IIA, while they resume in LC IIB2, represented

by WS II bowls with simple geometric patterns. For comparative purposes, on the same site, Aegean pottery is represented by 14 sherds belonging to no more than 8 vessels, all Mycenaean and dating to the LH IIIA2 (Hankey 1984: 20).

Lachish is another rich source for imported, especially Cypriot, pottery in the southern Levant, of which there is a total of 3358 sherds, most of them from WS II bowls (1422) and BR II and I/II bowls, jugs and juglets (1430) (Bunimovitz 2004: 1262-71). These quantities are especially impressive when compared to the 1434 vessels and sherds which had been found up to 2004 in Ajjul, Far'ah, Jemmeh, Haror, el-Hesi, Sera' and Ridan combined. The large volume of imported pottery is a testament to the strength of the connections of inland Lachish with the port sites of the coastal plain. Most of them come from LB II levels and they continue to be imported throughout the 13th century and up to Level VII. The association of imports with coastal sites and those that are integrated in the same network as them (such as Lachish) can be seen if we compare with the Jordan Valley sites, such as LB Beth Shean, where only 31 Cypriot sherds have been identified in a 6,192-sherd assemblage, and only one possible Mycenaean stirrup jar (Mullins 2007: 450-452).

Despite the outstanding size of the Lachish assemblage, its degree of elaboration, in terms of attention paid to the execution of the shapes and decoration, is low (Bienkowski 1986: 146-147). This agrees with what is known so far about Cypriot exports outside the island, which were partly discussed in Chapter 7. I stated there that the visual complexity of the decoration is not the relevant and interesting feature of Cypriot pottery as an export object to the Levant, and this is confirmed externally by the characteristics of the local imitation of Cypriot pottery. This bypasses the more elaborate features and only selectively adapts the original wares, mostly drawing inspiration from the aspects of shape that are easily reproduced on the wheel (Prag 1985: 154-163).

The selectivity in the wares exported from Cyprus gives indications about the character of that trade: it was not random but specific and targeted, leading to the suggestion of intense knowledge and interaction on both sides: Cypriot workshops created products intended for export, perhaps aware of the fact that less investment on them was sufficient, and Levantine cities knew what was available in terms of Cypriot pottery and chose the elements of it that were of use and interest to them.

In terms of quantity, the scale of the trade in Mycenaean pottery is much smaller than in Cypriot in the southern Levant. In Tell el-Ajjul, for example, the ratio

of Cypriot to Mycenaean pottery (most LH IIIB, from LB IIB contexts) is 20:1 (1986:1 47). Apart from the differences in frequency, however, is it possible to argue for differences in reception as well, and see if, in that case, the decoration of the pottery is a characteristic relevant in itself? One of the most famous findspots is the "Mycenaean Tomb" from middle-late 14th century Dan, whose ceramic contents are 26% Mycenaean, including a chariot (see fig. 8.22). Neutron Activation Analysis was carried out on 9 of the vessels, showing an origin from the Argolid (Ben-Dov 2002: 64-107; 223-226). The local pottery associated with it is either deformed or the surface treatment carelessly executed, leading Ben-Dov (2002: 223) to suggest that it might have been especially produced for funerary purposes, or chosen for placement in the tomb because it was unsuitable for other kinds of consumption. This becomes especially relevant in the light of Sherratt's hypothesis concerning the role that elaborate imported tableware could have played as part of ritualised practices (Sherratt 1999: 184-192).

Perhaps what we are seeing here is the combination of two different strategies co-existing in the same tomb: investing on some high status items, such as chariot kraters, which might have had direct elite associations, but paying less attention to those parts of the funerary assemblage that had less potential for conveying impressions of social position and distinction, and focusing the strategy of substitution on those. This could suggest that, in the case of some Mycenaean imports, their decoration could have been a deciding factor, but they also need to be seen in the light of the treatment of local pottery. If this has limited potential to act as a marker of distinction, and is therefore not emphasized, then perhaps in the use of imported items such as kraters we should also under-emphasize the ceramic aspect (for the consumers at least) and focus instead on other elements increasing desirability, such as the distant origin or the visual symbolism of the object, which is expressed and created through decoration, employed at this specific context where the practices of the Levant and the opportunities and exposure created by trade overlap. Additionally, it is helpful to recognize that there are objects, such as elaborate pictorial kraters, which stand at the cusp between decoration being significant as a sign of something else and decoration being a feature in itself, perhaps by reaching a point where it is just too elaborate to ignore, and demands attention. The pictorial kraters from the Argolid are especially interesting in that regard, because they are being produced with a form and decoration geared towards being appealing exclusively to external consumers. The scenes chosen

for depiction on them must therefore have been considered significant, placing those vessels in a slightly different position compared to the majority of ceramics, including traded ones.

In the northern Levant, it seems that connections with Cyprus and the Aegean were limited to specific sites in the coastal areas, since imports did not penetrate far into the Levantine hinterland in the LBA (Bartl and al-Maqdissi 2007: 248). With the exception of Ugarit, Alalakh is the site with the strongest presence of Mycenaean pottery, with 108 vessels in total up to 2004, dating to LH IIIA2 (contemporary with Amarna), before the restriction of activities on the site, and under 0.5% of the sherds excavated during the 2003-2004 season (Koehl 2010: 81-83; Sumaka'i 2010: 135-137). The only unorthodox feature of the 2003-2004 assemblage is that the majority of sherds come from amphoroid kraters and globular flasks, rather than the more usual stirrup jars. It is an open question whether the two most common shapes, the flasks and kraters, are functionally related, for example as parts of the same drinking sets, with the flasks containing a wine-based concentrate which was then diluted in the kraters or another precious additive for wine, such as an aromatic. To reinforce the point made above about the southern Levant, the Cypriot collection of pottery from the same excavation period is more than five times larger, including 249 sherds and 7 complete or restorable vessels, mostly BR I (60 estimated vessels) and WS II bowls (87 estimated vessels) (Kozal 2010: 67-70). As with the Mycenaean material, Alalakh offers one of the largest connections of Cypriot pottery outside of Cyprus, despite being an inland site.

Ugarit, along with the associated sites of Ras Ibn Hani (the location of a residence of the royal family and an associated tomb), and the harbour and funerary caves of Minet el-Beida, is the area most strongly associated with Mycenanean imports, as well as the local production of pottery imitating them, although even here their presence is far from overwhelming, especially if considered in relation to the large extent of the excavated area (Bell 2006: 36-41,56). In early publications of the site, Mycenaean imports were over-represented at the expense of local ordinary pottery, although their presence remains stronger than anywhere else (Monchambert 2008: 149-150; Yon *et al.* 2000: 1-10). This pottery is more common in funerary contexts but it is not restricted to them, and it dates mostly to LH IIIB, up to the transition to IIIC1. In the later phases of the site, the Mycenaean-style vessels are not imported from Greece but from Cyprus or elsewhere in the Levant. The information

on distribution suggests that in the last phases of use of the site, these were not considered especially luxurious products, since they are encountered in all kinds of contexts, and would have been a part of the everyday material surroundings of the majority of the inhabitants (2000: 19).

This is interesting because, while most of the Mycenaean imports might not have been exceptional, that situation of incorporation certainly is, as far as we know. Perhaps it can be attributed to the close link to Cyprus and the site's role as the funnel of Aegean imports into the Northern Levant, which created in Ugarit a distinct relationship with the material, through familiarity with its appearance and properties, but perhaps also through the possession of knowledge about its origin and security in the potential of acquiring it. This integration can be interpreted as the usage (and therefore understanding) of the imported vessels in the terms of the local material culture, and something similar can be suggested for the reception of imported decorated pottery in the Levant in general, as indicated by the characteristics of WS pottery: decoration is rarely a significant category in the Levant, and therefore the decoration of imports is not either, except to the degree that it makes objects look the way they are supposed to, according to their origins, contents and associations. Moving into the final discussion session, we can conceptualize decorated pottery as created in its own context and terms, and then, once exported, being received in a new way. There is then, perhaps, a slight disconnect between producers and consumers, where there is sufficient feedback to support effective trading strategies, but the intentions behind choices made at either side matter less in practical terms.

Discussion and conclusions

The boom and shrinkage of urbanisation in the southern Levant can be constructed as a fairly simple narrative. In the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age a revival of urban culture started, resulting in the construction of large centres which controlled hinterlands. The urban centres are typically characterised by rich material culture, fortification walls and distant trading contacts. The peak of this phase is at the end of the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, and it involves a close relationship with the Nile Delta. In the remainder of Late Bronze Age, however,

the southern Levant falls under direct Egyptian control and the signs of autonomous urbanisation such as fortification walls disappear, while the larger states of the north seem more resilient, retaining elements of their structure. In parallel with that story, I have followed changes in decorated pottery (see Table 8.66, Chart 8.2). Overall, these appear to form consistent broader trends, with the exception of a cluster of sites in the northern Jordan Valley, especially Pella and Beth-Shean: there is an increase in pottery decoration in the beginning of the MBA, followed in most cases by a decrease in the end of the same period. The overall percentages of decorated vessels are much higher, but potentially simpler, in the LB I and often even higher in the LB II.

It is when we attempt to fit these two narratives to one another that the picture becomes much more complicated. Clearly, it is not possible to establish a direct relationship between social complexity and levels of decoration. Instead, there are two other dominant forces which shape the ceramic landscape in the southern Levant: networks and demand. Starting with the latter, it is very important to identify what kind of material demands exist in each cultural and historical phase and context, and which kind of production creates these and results from them, in a constant feedback relationship. Based on the products of decoration, there are two different kinds of demand. The first is for simply decorated objects in everyday life, such as incised storage jars in the MBA. These are the result of a process of mass production, which is established and entrenched to support the needs of an increasing urban population.

The second is for more individual products, often tablewares, which, according to Knapp's model, are a result of the increasing potential for the creation of specialised products in the same urban market system. It is clear from the results, however, that this not a systematic happening, but a potential which is only occasionally embraced, and by specific sites. There is no evidence to support an overall pattern of the urban life as richly embellished in all aspects of everyday life, including pottery, and of pottery being heavily involved in a process of competition and display as part of that rich, good life. Decorated pottery in the southern Levant is not implicated in social complexity. The separation of the preferences and activities of certain sites brings us to the second important element for understanding the structuring of the southern Levantine societies: the articulation and connection of sites in shifting networks, resulting in clusters and close relationships, along which demands, cultural practices and the material products resulting from these and shaping them flow. We can see this in the very similar developments observed in sites where

association has been established by sources independent to pottery. The flexibility of these interactions is also visible in the degree of independence of some rural sites, such as Tell el-Hayyat and even sites which are not engaged in the system at all, such as Zahrat adh-Dhra. Both of these forces operate throughout the Bronze Age in different degrees and ways, even when Egyptian presence is at its peak. As long as these local systems and connections exist, the changes in pottery decoration flow through them, while a highly complex urban system itself is not a dominant factor in determining the presence of decoration, although as I have shown, the sustaining of some degree of social complexity, often maintained by Egyptian presence, is perhaps associated with higher complexity in decoration as well.

These observations are fully borne out by the study of connections, trade and importations and the way they are selected and incorporated in Levantine life: the flows of imports work through the same networks that structure other social and material developments, which is visible in the presence and distribution of pottery of foreign origin, and the similar elements in articulated sites. Additionally, the choice and interest in imports reflects attitudes towards decorated pottery: it is not a dominant influence, even in the cases where vessels are imported to be used in themselves, such as White Slip bowls, suggesting that the same categories and viewpoints that are in place for local material culture are applied to foreign as well.

The picture is different in the northern Levant, and the reason for this is the different social organisation of the region, which reflects on the way decorated pottery is used. A recurring characteristic in that area, which is visible even through the lack of detailed quantitative data, is the existence of different ceramic deposits in different kinds of contexts. For example, higher numbers of painted and complex painted decoration is found in Palace contexts, such as in Ebla. This is connected to more indications for elite/non-elite distinctions which can be ceramically expressed through the creation of elaborate styles, and which are more strongly associated with shapes conducive to display during consumption, such as open and pouring vessels. It is therefore likely that we can attribute these differences in the northern Levant to a structuring of the area, not through relatively loose networks of sites between which market demands move, but through larger, more centralised states, requiring and resulting in a sharper elite/non-elite distinction, which embraces a wider range of objects, including decorated pottery. Once again, this is also reflected in imports, which more often in the north include elaborate display tableware, such as kraters,

and closed shapes whose contents could have been used in association with that tableware. Nuzi ware in Alalakh could be part of the same distinction, but the lack of quantitative data makes fully establishing this difficult. In the Mitanni core, the same ware demonstrates a process of development of elaborate styles in a social environment of pre-existing complexity which is very useful for comparative purposes.

Chapter 9. Conclusions

I have presented an in-depth examination of the strength of presence of decorated pottery in most major regions of the eastern Mediterranean, its fluctuations through time and its material and social associations. Out of that large and varied pattern, we can pull specific ways in which decorated pottery mediates the relationships between socially mobilized aesthetics, as defined in Chapter 2, and the ways social power is structured and distributed, by distinguishing recurrent associations under specific social conditions. I am going to start this final chapter by returning to the first three research questions, and using the answers I have been able to provide to them to summarise the results of the analysis. Then, I will discuss different structuring parameters and their interaction with ceramic practices, particularly those characteristics of decoration that especially serve specific structures over others. Following that, I will return to the hypothesis of aesthetic simplification, and through its re-examination move onto the deepest research question and finish with the final conclusion, a perhaps inevitably coarse distillation of a broader pattern that emerged out of the work on the second millennium, and an answer to the contradiction of complexity versus simplicity, in society as well as material culture.

The first question I asked was how much decorated pottery there actually is, and the quantitative aspect of this work has provided ample answers to this question. To leave, however, a final impression, it is interesting to look at the average, very gross, decoration percentages from every case study. These are not intended to be accurate measures in any way, but they are effective in demonstrating the scale of the difference: in Protopalatial and Neopalatial Crete, on average roughly 30-35% of the pottery is decorated, in New Kingdom Egypt 0-5%, in Cyprus 30% and in the southern Levant 10-15% (for the northern Levant there were not enough quantifiable samples for this calculation). Egypt not only displays the lowest rate of decoration, but this also derives from the larger centres, which contained more elaborate material culture. A sample including the full range of sites would provide far lower percentages, which is why the range was estimated at 0-5%, although the average from the sites studied is actually 5%.

It is also possible to summarise the broader pattern of the changes, beyond noting average quantities: in Egypt, decoration is generally very low with distinct phases of increase, associated with a very specific kind of decoration (Blue Painted).

In Crete, decoration is very high, in combination with the appearance of specific peaks, which stand out even against an already high background. In Cyprus, decoration is also consistently high but we cannot isolate a specific period or style when it explodes. In the southern Levant, the quantity of decoration is moderate, with a slight declining trend in the later Bronze Age and occasional peaks, often expressed through regional patterns and associated with specific areas. Finally, in the northern Levant, the quantity of decoration is moderate in the Middle Bronze Age and falls sharply in the Late Bronze Age, with occasional peaks in both of those periods.

The second question was 'when'. The ways social power is structured in society create different relationships and correlate with different object characteristics, developing those that serve the needs of each particular structure, at the same time never excluding the possibility of being changed themselves. In Bevan's 2007 (13-17) comparative work on stone vessels the factors of quality and diversity are introduced as useful ways of structuring the properties of objects and introducing distinctions among those and the people that used them. From these parameters, it is possible to, if not truly work backwards towards the conditions that shaped them and in which they were employed, at least come up with a range of options for organization, which can be employed as a useful way to summarise the results of this thesis.

Starting from the most obvious points of difference, the highest peaks of decoration in the overall region of the eastern Mediterranean, in terms of sheer elaboration, are Kamares Ware, the Cretan palatial traditions, Blue Painted pottery and Nuzi Ware. The lowest dips on the other hand are seen in most Egyptian deposits, even in the time of Blue Painted pottery, and in late LBA Northern Levant. Conversely, the periods most associated with social shifts and transition, are the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt, and the corresponding Hyksos period in the Delta and late MB II-early LB I in the Southern Levant, the MC III/LCI transition on Cyprus and the MM III on Crete. Interestingly, all these periods are associated with large quantities of decoration and the establishment of trends, which in some cases will be significant for developments in following periods. They are also periods of great diversity, a characteristic which is extensively discussed in the following section.

I will return to the last research question once I have examined more deeply some of the social associations emphasized by the third question of 'where', meaning what are the structures of power distribution and social conditions that are linked with

choices and emphases that we can pick out in decorative changes. I sketched the broad outline of ceramic changes above, but we can study further the degree to which a centralized and hierarchical social structure can be connected to decoration levels, and especially, to patterns in the changes of those levels.

Complexity

The first parameter to explore in relation to pottery decoration is social complexity, and the different ways it can manifest materially, and specifically ceramically. In the introduction I discussed the different aspects and parameters of complexity, which I also adopted as axes of study, but I find the concept in itself useful for bringing together a complex of ideas, as long as it is not employed with the implication of an evolutionary trajectory towards an ultimate, improved, form of social organization (Wynne Jones and Kohring 2007: 3). I will start with a very literal understanding of complexity, at the basic level of the potential for acquisition and manipulation of resources. The prime evidence for the importance of this factor in the creation and investment in ceramic decoration can be seen in the case study of Blue Painted pottery, and it has to do with the potential that powerful pre-existing institutions have to gain, and maintain, access to unique resources. These resources can be variably employed, but they already offer possibilities for further elaborating on materials. Moreover, they introduce the possibility of drawing a clear distinction in quality, based on a real difference in access, which can be communicated through their use in pottery decoration. The complex infrastructure permitting the employment of resources such as cobalt blue is a factor not only in the creation of decoration, but also in its dissemination, and the processes through which it is acquired, since part of the pot's path is already prescribed.

For the majority of the regions under study, the acquisition of special resources is of less relevance for the relationship of the creation of decorated pottery with social complexity. The fact that Egypt differs in this has to do with the very different scale of the state and the different way in which it operates: commanding resources and organizing their acquisition, management and transformation in an official way is an important ability of the bureaucratic state, which can be brought to bear even in materials which are not usually involved in this process, such as pottery. Moreover, pottery might not be usually involved in the circulation of exclusive

material, but the centralized organization of a large part of ceramic production enables the linkage of the two systems under the right conditions.

In most other cases, we can assume that clay was an easy-to-procure material, requiring at most transport from one area to another. The most common way, therefore, to elaborate technological products was through the process of their creation. This is another opportunity to make distinctions through introducing gradations in the quality of pottery although, as we will see, the strategies through which this is attempted matter for the resulting connections between decoration and claims to distinction or power. The key element here is the potential for specialization, in the sense of the ability to support the investment of time and effort in the manufacture of vessels through the maintenance of full-time potters (for the multiple uses of the term see for example Blackman et al. 1993; Longacre 1999: 44; Rice 1981). It is this ability that permits the creation of material such as Kamares Ware, North Syrian/Cilician Painted Ware or Nuzi ware (Brumfiel and Earle 1987: 5; Olausson 2008), vessels whose decoration materializes the time, resources and potential of exclusivity that went into their creation. From the support of manufacturers, comes the potential of controlling their output, affecting desirability and directing the flow of the final, highly elaborate, products to a higher or lower degree, and by displaying those products demonstrating their claim to possessing the potential to create them in the first place. So far, therefore, we are talking of potential: the potential of controlling production and restricting consumption through either the material or its subsequent processing, which can exist in societies which are complex enough to support these structures.

As discussed in the early section on style, the existence of multiple social groups, especially if they consider themselves as such and have distinct identities, both increases social complexity and further encourages its material expression, creating a feedback loop. This aspect of complexity has been called heterogeneity, and it is useful to separate it analytically from the hierarchical aspect of complexity (McGuire 1983). What matters, however, is not only the variety of social groups, but also the kinds of ties that connect them. The early Middle Cypriot, for example, is notable for the multiplicity of regional groups, and this variation finds a ceramic expression in the diversity of styles archaeologically recognized on the island — distinct ways of doing things from place to place, not necessarily (at this point) because they want to consciously project an identity to their neighbours, but because

this is the way they do things over here, and it is different from over there. In terms of the parameters introduced earlier, this corresponds to diversity, where multiple types of markers and indexes coexist, and they are employed in complex ways. This process results on Cyprus in high quantities of decoration. These groups have only informal, and horizontal, connections, but in other societies we can see different forms of organization: in the roughly contemporary Southern Levant there are networks of social and trade connection, spreading similar ceramic practices from place to place, while in the larger palace-centred states, such as Egypt and those of the Northern Levant, the vertical structure of the multiple social groups creates different opportunities and restrictions in mobilising the potential of complicating the production process, as well as creating differences in the power to make and enforce decisions and greater incentives for employing material complexity.

How this potential is put into action is crucial for understanding the role that decorated pottery can play and the conditions under which it becomes more elaborate. Social structure is created and exists through a process of negotiation, which is where the mobilisation of material complexity takes place. As analyzed in Chapter 2, decoration serves to make explicit what a vessel is, or ought to be, in a specific social and material context and maintains a connection with the aspect of the object (here approached through aesthetics) that creates, maintains and communicates social relationships. There are many opportunities and implicit moments when social place and role is understood, but some of the most archaeologically readable are specific, formalized, occasions which are created explicitly in order to bring groups of people together, often around the consumption of food and drink, in which pottery plays a key role, and where we can see connections explicitly articulated. These environments are controlled in order to project a specific vision of reality or aspiration: the physical co-existence of groups becomes an opportunity to display and create difference, in some cases manifesting as explicit opposition, through multiple means, including the vessels used for consumption. Such occasions are especially notable in Minoan Crete because of the recurrent occurrence of groups of consumption vessels, seen in the relevant case studies. This has to do with the specifics of social structure and nature of hierarchy, in the sense of social ranking, and the means through which power is achieved on the island. Group consumption is also visible in Bronze Age Cyprus. In both cases, we can suggest relationships between the quantity of elaborate vessels, their opposition to the simpler ones and the structuring of the social occasion, partly

in reality and partly as desirable projected ideal: in Crete a minority of impressively elaborate vessels is contrasted to a mass of conical cups, while in Cyprus such consumption contexts are associated with high quantities of decoration, as in LC Enkomi, and in some occasions also high levels of elaboration, underplaying the element of opposition. The most notable examples of this trend can be seen in MC, as in the group consumption contexts at Alambra Mouttes, and perhaps in a related way in the emphasis on diversity through complex decoration in the cemeteries at Deneia. In these occasions, what we could be seeing is what happens when we have a very complex social organization in the sense of diversity, but with limited differentiations in power restricting the opportunities for acquisition of material culture and expression through it. The difference seen here between Cyprus and Crete can be articulated through different combinations of elements belonging to the parameter of diversity: in the case of Crete, this can be combined with attempts to simultaneously establish a qualitative or quantitative difference between people and their objects.

In Egypt, on the other hand, group consumption of food and drink takes a different form altogether, with banquets being part of the elite way of life and festivals being important opportunities for community gathering and connection (not to mention concentration of resources), but the two remaining separate. In terms of pottery, this means that there is far less direct contact and interaction across vertical social categories, and therefore also less interaction of the material culture employed by each. This separation is made meaningful in itself, and serves to reinforce stratification, pottery decoration itself becoming involved in the sharpness of that distinction. Finally, in parts of the southern Levant, we can note an altogether different pull for decorative emphasis, which is focused on storage jars, as well as pouring vessels, while the evidence which is directly associated with consumption in communal occasions is mostly oriented towards the consumption of dry foods and shows little concern about decoration, not even in the form of a deliberate and conspicuous absence. However, in the northern Levant, in the phases where elaborate decoration is used this is mostly found on serving and consumption vessels, as in Ebla, recalling again this communal context of competition and display. This partly parallels Crete, which is not completely unexpected, given comparability of the scale of political formations (at least in some occasions, and in the case of Knossos) or at least the comparability of central institutions (the palaces). We could, therefore, say that there are two ways of introducing and negotiating complexity through decoration:

either by consumption vessels, which are displayed in deliberate social occasions and create associations between their attributes and their user, or by 'environment' vessels, present in the setting of life and acting in multiple ways as a background to life, explicit (as the garlanded Blue Painted jars in Egyptian depictions of banqueting) or implicit, as the same jars existed in workmen's villages or the storage vessels of the southern Levant.

Hierarchy

Going forward from this point, what we are looking for is the guiding factors behind these different forms of material behavior, described above in some of their most conspicuous forms. I have mentioned already the significance of horizontal and vertical connections between social groups and the different kinds of complexity they produce, and now I will focus specifically on expressions of vertical, hierarchical, arrangements. This is most strongly expressed in the iconic central elite institution of the Mediterranean Bronze Age, the palace, which we have encountered in the Aegean, the large territorial states of the Northern Levant, the Middle Bronze Age Southern Levant (with more limited expansion), and (heavily debated) in Late Bronze Age Cyprus. The most extreme expression is the intricate bureaucracy of Middle and New Kingdom Egypt, often described almost in terms of a modern state. Hierarchy itself however is not a single social characteristic, but it intersects with others, such as the permanence of a ranked order or the relationship between hierarchy and the sources and negotiation of power (Crumley 1987: 160; Souvatzi 2007: 51-52).

In many of the societies of the eastern Mediterranean we see strongly expressed forms of hierarchical stratification structured around elites controlling a central institution, often manifesting physically as a building with multiple functions, as well as a series of activities and a way of life. This distribution of power allows the elite to exercise a disproportionate level of control, affecting all members of society and concentrating the potential of complexity for creating and cultivating material distinction. With this in mind, we can pay attention to the historical moments we have identified as peaks of this hierarchical complexity in the eastern Mediterranean, combined with evidence for the existence of central institutions: the New Kingdom Dynasties, Neopalatial Crete (particularly Knossos) and the northern Levantine states

under the impact of the Mitanni empire all stand out as high points in the concentration of power with a prominent institution.

In some areas there is a discernible pattern of peaks in ceramic complexity, and in others there is not: the 'Dark-on-Light Lustrous' in Crete (which have also been called 'Special Palatial Traditions) and Blue Painted in Egypt are the most visible of such peaks. I discussed hints at such a pattern above, but now it is possible to start thinking about what kind of connection it represents, and relate the creation of peaks with the attempt to use decoration in order to establish a ranking in quality, identifying objects not just as differing from one another, but also as ranked, some of them being better than others. We can also follow the same trend of peaking complexity in ceramic decoration at smaller, but still visible, concentrations of political strength: Kamares ware in the Protopalatial, North Syrian/Cilician Painted ware in the Middle Bronze Age states of the Northern Levant and, to some degree, Levantine Painted Ware at the high point of urbanization in the Southern Levant (although in that case there are further complicating factors I will discuss below). In all cases, these peaks also coincide with high points of hierarchical complexity, perhaps intersecting with other aspects of complexity, such as group diversity. The reverse however, is not true: not all high points of hierarchy have their equivalent ceramic moment- the highly centralized Middle Kingdom has given no such signs and we know too little of the Nuzi ware and its quantitative characteristics to recognize it as a true peak, employed in a consistent way. This therefore leads to two further questions.

Is the high social complexity a necessary but not sufficient condition for this pattern of peaks? If not sufficient, what distinguishes the instances that develop it from those that do not? And are the smaller peaks we have identified really the same phenomenon as the larger ones? Or are we we looking at the degree of success of attempts to establish a distinction in the quality of ceramics through decoration, achieving a degree of correspondence between the image ceramic decoration is projecting and the structure of social reality? Furthermore, it is necessary to clarify that what I am discussing here is a pattern in complexity, and not the presence of complexity itself, which is a different matter, as I will argue below concerning Cyprus. In this interpretation, Neopalatial Crete differs because, although palatial and hierarchical, the structure of power is less permanent and its origin and exercise more

diverse. At the same time, there is enough of a power differential and complexity in organization to create this pattern of peaks.

The association of powerful elites with central institutions can create this pattern because in these particular social environments the circumstances are ideal for the creation of elaborate material culture: the concentration of resources enables both their investment in labour-intensive ceramics and a degree of restriction, to the extent that their distribution is controlled, at the same time as there is incentive for this investment of resources, in service of the maintenance and intensification of the existing social distinctions.

These hierarchies are not, however, static and there are multiple factors that influence, not only the form they take but also how they are changed and maintained. Social structure is always under negotiation, but the degree to which it is open to (or vulnerable to) changes, its flexibility differs. Access to power also differs, in the sense of the range of groups who have some connection to the highest hierarchical levels, a direct point of contact with them, and an understanding of their workings. The structure of power can therefore be solid or flexible, limited or dispersed, open and visible or closed. I mentioned above the incentive to maintain distinctions, and this incentive becomes especially strong if social conditions are uncertain and under pressure. It is then when there is particular need for mobilisation of multiple resources, which can introduce pottery as a material factor among others, providing an answer to the question of why elites would even engage with and invest into the material. At the same time, this creates the potential for visible material connections made between pottery and other categories of objects, both through their involvement in the same process and through conscious investigation of the different properties of objects and materials, potentially facilitated by this stimulating atmosphere as well as the possibility for increased contact created by the provision of support to different craftspeople.

Studying specifically this parameter in the eastern Mediterranean, we can note the impact of uncertainty and instability in the nature, creation and exercise of hierarchical power as it is expressed in the material of decorated pottery and essentially evaluate the potential of different social structures to make these connections particularly solid and successful and broadcast them. In New Kingdom Egypt, the archetypical case of a stable bureaucratic state supported by a regulated range of officials, Bourriau has associated the appearance of Blue Painted pottery

with the establishment and stabilization of the 18th Dynasty. At the same time, it is useful to remember that New Kingdom Egypt, despite the social stratification, is not the Old Kingdom, and the Workmens' Village (let alone Deir el-Medina) are not the barracks at Giza. New Kingdom society is complex not only in terms of hierarchy but also in the diversity of social subgroups which can participate in the distribution of power (McGuire 1983).

In Minoan Crete, highly elaborate styles recur again and again as elite groups compete for a role in institutions that could be more stable than those who occupied them. There are undeniable signs of inequality, but it is its structure and permanence that are under question. Is this question merely one of modern research, or was it a feature of Cretan society, necessitating the investment in feasting and its paraphernalia? To further complicate the situation, it has been suggested that the elite groups themselves belong to broader social configurations, factions, having ties that crosscut social distinction, further increasing the degree of openness. Beyond the highest elites, there is also a multiplicity of intermediate groups of uncertain position and a degree of access to power, in recent works often called sub-elites, a term which is attempting to express this sense of contact with and knowledge of the elite world without full participation in it, and perhaps indicate alternative means of negotiating position and power. This brings back to mind the tension identified above between diversity in the decoration of Cretan pottery and the attempts to establish scaling in quality, which becomes much more difficult when the foci of power are multiple and under negotiation, and their material aspects of power develop according to this. The ability to establish clear and sharp distinctions is significant, and the co-extistence of multiple scales of evaluating decorated objects, the multiplicity of associations and the openness of access all challenge that ability. Additional challenges can come from the ways decorated pottery interacts with other materials. For example, the ability to use decoration in order to reproduce metallic features can be seen as a destabilizing effect, introducing ambiguities and gradation in a differentiation which could otherwise be conceived of as obvious, and obviously ranked. Perhaps the association of the most successive examples of skeuomorphism with palatial contexts in Minoan Crete is part of an attempt to control and retain these desirable, admired but troublesome elements alongside the "originals" as well as the organized circumstances under which they were used. This section is focused on this specific intersection of hierarchy and its negotiation, so I will not discuss Cyprus and the

Levant here — there are other processes at work in those regions that will soon be analysed.

A crucial factor that brings together these aspects of social organization with effects on the structure of social differentiation is scale (Johnson 1982: 391; Price and Feinman 2010: 2). Even when hierarchy is recognized, the nature and scale of that ranking is crucial for the way social negotiation is carried out on the one hand, and the resources involved on the other, which is where pottery comes into play, alongside the multiplicity and diversity of social groups engaging in interaction. Finally, if we recognize scale as an important factor, it remains a question whether the smaller peaks are directly comparable, rather than parallels: in some cases it is not possible to scale down a phenomenon and have it remain the same- when the scale changes, the whole pattern of interaction changes.

Centralisation

Investment in material and its ability to create distinction is one aspect of hierarchy, but there is also another side to it, bringing us closer to the generative hypothesis of this work. In order to create distinction through, literally, outstanding objects, the other side is necessary, the background against which distinction will shine (Loney 2000: 655-656), making ranking explicit. This is again a question of potential — a phenomenon associated with powerful central institutions because that is where it can happen. Having the ability to support ceramic specialists, especially at a larger scale, means that the investment of labour can be directed not only towards highly elaborate products, but also instead towards a higher volume of production (Rice 1981): a fast, repetitive process taking place in dedicated sessions and resulting in vessels with very standardized appearances (Blackman et al. 1993), not because they were intentionally designed to be that way but as a result of the process of their creation, and the factors that played a significant part in determining the choices made during their manufacture. Additionally, this specific form of specialisation reduces flexibility, leaving the economy of manufacture and distribution open to the direct intervention and manipulation of elites, facilitating the restriction or management of access (Wattenmaker 1998: 7-10) and increases distinction, making ranking easier and more explicit, since we are dealing with limited and distinct categories. Egypt is the classic example of this process, conforming to our expectations: a bureaucratic

state whose organization corresponds to uniform and efficient equipment for life. The creation of a majority of unadorned and uniform vessels results in a reduction in the presence of material elaboration in the lives of the majority, once again not by design, but necessarily by limiting the availability of complexity to those who have fewer possibilities for access to material resources, creating a deprivation by necessity under specific social conditions. It is, however, only at the largest scale of centralized management and organization that this de facto limit is introduced, and the fact that it is not intentional does not mean that it is not significant or impactful.

Egypt is not, however, the only example of this process: in fact, an increase in standardized mass production can be seen in multiple cases around the Eastern Mediterranean during the advanced Late Bronze Age: In Cyprus, regional variation is replaced by a standardized range of Plain White and White Painted wheelmade pottery, in the Northern Levant the highly elaborate styles such as Nuzi disappear alongside the sharp decrease of painted decoration in general, and even in the more peripheral Mainland Aegean standardization increases and decorative complexity is less emphasized after the palaces become well-established. I mentioned that this characteristic is the result of the concerns guiding production, rather than a deliberate strategy, and perhaps the predominant impression that we gain is one of concern with efficiency, which has also been suggested in periods when similar strategies were employed in Minoan Crete.

What does efficiency mean then, in the context of the Late Bronze Age? Forming a plausible impression of the character of efficiency for each of these regions might help approach what appears to be a uniform trend from disparate perspectives, as a kind of convergent evolution: a similar result because of similar processes, even if the conditions which created these processes varied. So, in Cyprus, the organization of mass production is potentially guided by urban elites, perhaps in connection to trade (particularly affecting the vessels most commonly exported, juglets and White Slip bowls) or, alternatively, by self-organizing distinct social groups, which are associated especially with pottery-making and perhaps metallurgy, operating in specialized settlements such as Ambelikou *Aletri*. Either way, efficiency in this case is seen in the production of a large volume of material, conforming to the now uniform ways of doing things across the island, and maintaining to a sufficient level the functions formerly fulfilled by the diverse decorated material, both in everyday life and in markets beyond the island.

The one side of mass production is the rapid turnout of vessels and in some cases the resulting deprivation by necessity. The other side is the uniform, unadorned, and standardized product as the contrast to the highly elaborate, suggesting a sharp division. This indicates different strategies and paths leading to social division: through imposed uniformity or through display and competition. As we have seen, these also come from structures which differ in essence and in practice. This opposition is repeatedly used and encountered in Neopalatial Crete, seen in the deposits made up of masses of identical conical cups. To a lesser degree, I have shown shades of the same phenomenon in the previous, Protopalatial, period but there are some differences: this kind of deposit, composed almost entirely of vessels intended for consumption, contains greater quantities of simple decoration in the Protopalatial, as both Malia and Knossos show (despite the overall lower quantity of decoration in the Protopalatial compared to the Neopalatial period), and consumption scale is also smaller, suggesting a powerful presence of diversy, partly tempering distinctions made via decoration. This ceramic picture fits well with the interpretations of the changed role of the palace as a physical building, which in the Neopalatial period was oriented more towards restriction and exclusion (Hamilakis 2013: 162-164). These features can come together as an attempt to project and create a desired hierarchy by all means available.

Finally, a third interesting aspect in mass production is its involvement with official administrative processes, which produces yet more contrast, based on the reliance on different forms of distribution and introduces new nuances to the creation of social opposition. Specifically in Egypt, we are aware of the ties between small open shapes and beer bottles and the distribution of rations, maintaining dependent populations, such as those in the various workmen's villages. The material environment of those people's lives was intended to be plain and reliant on the state's provisions, but we consistently find the most elaborate kind of pottery, Blue Painted, in those same sites. In these cases, the mere fact of the close contact with power creates openings and opportunities that people can and do take advantage of. In a way, we can see decorated pottery play the role of resistance, and an effort for involvement in claiming power. However, access to this source of enrichment is wholly reliant on the elite connection, existing in a restrictive, closed framework where even the contrast of material equipment is not direct because it is not spatially co-present, but social relationships are instead structured in a more rigid and prescriptive way. To

conclude, the more opportunities there are for directing the process of production, distribution, consumption and disposal from the top down, the more structured and distinct the outcome will be, which is why we get such as clean, comparatively speaking, distribution pattern for Blue Painted pottery in the New Kingdom.

If, in Blue Painted pottery in workmen's villages, we see people sneaking their way into a more elaborate life, the alternative is decorated pottery's presence in daily life in larger quantities and with a more natural distribution, not restricted to limited centres or contexts. In this employment of decoration, we can see in action the reverse of social forces pulling and directing towards the centre (or multiple centres); a greater degree of availability of decorated products and the potential for larger numbers of people to access (or make) these for themselves, selecting the components of their social and material worlds, blurring differences between categories of objects. In this study, we can associate this use of pottery with high overall quantities of decoration, regardless of complexity. These can be seen most strikingly in Cyprus and the Aegean, where percentages above 20% are unremarkable, and decorated vessels often make up more than half of assemblages. The motifs can be simple, but the overall degree of investment and the possibility to make it can be considered in a cumulative way. Additionally, there exists the potential for high levels of complexity, which can be employed in context-specific ways but without always discernible ranking or status. Cyprus is the clearest example, while the Aegean can combine this with the hierarchical features discussed above. Moreover, it is interesting to look at what contexts these higher rates of decoration are found in: most of the vessels are either small and open in everyday use, or medium-sized closed, used for the transport and storage of liquids and solids, all together operating not in an explicit, prescribed context but in the creation and structure of the material world through which people constantly moved.

Quantity of decoration is, therefore, also a significant and revealing factor, as well as its quality and elaboration. From a practical point of view alone, the more of it there is, the more opportunities for its diversification exist and the less for its control and the creation of clear-cut distinctions. Two factors are especially important for understanding the part quantity plays: its constancy and its relationship with elaborate decoration, both as an overall trend in the period and in specific assemblages (two scales revealing different things). The constancy is important because the association I suggested above between the high quantities of simple decoration and the freedom to

select it and use it in the structuring of life, only stands in cases where the phenomenon is sustained, and not a context-specific spike in quantity that can be attributed to a specific activity, such as Blue Painted in certain occasions, or production sites of a certain kind of pottery. This steady presence of simple decoration exists in the background of the peaks in elaboration that we see in Crete, as I demonstrated for Knossos, and actually overall decoration tends to increase in these same peak periods, perhaps stimulated by the broader cultural taste, or in an effort to keep up with the most elaborate products, to the degree that this was possible. Furthermore, it is possible to suggest that stimulation works both ways: Nuzi Ware is preceded by a period of increase in decoration and greater experimentations, while Blue Painted pottery follows other decorated styles (whose variability decreases once a dominant, centrally-controlled style becomes established) as well as a phase of intense contact with other practices, both coming out of the Second Intermediate Period and through the early New Kingdom military campaigns in the Levant, which also affected experimentation with materials such as faience and glass, themselves materially connected with elaborately decorated pottery, particularly through the use of cobalt pigment, which associates them both visually and through the process of production (Shortland 2012).

Social complexity and aesthetic simplification: re-investigating the hypothesis

The essence of the proposed connection between increased simplicity of the appearance of widely available materials and increased social complexity, is that the potential investment in decoration and its social involvement and capabilities is transferred to high-value objects alone, which are easily controlled and restricted to the elites (Baines 1994; Baines and Yoffee 1998). Roughly put, the expected material expression of this process would be an observable decrease in the overall quantity of simple decorated pottery, a decreased interest in the elaboration of decorated pottery through the addition of value, and an increase in other conspicuous objects, of higher inherent value and conspicuously scaled in quality, with a restricted spatial and contextual distribution.

How closely does this hypothetical picture, initially proposed for Egypt and Mesopotamia (Wengrow 2001), fit the characteristics that we have observed in archaeological deposits all over the wider eastern Mediterranean? The closest direct

fit is, as originally hypothesized, Dynastic Egypt, which for some periods matches this description one-for-one, and on the basis of which the model was partly developed. This shift happened in the transition into the Early Dynastic Period, and it created not only an alienation from the process of aesthetic labor but also formed social homogeneity, from the elite perspective, that was directly relevant to the exercise of power on them and the organization of their labour (Wengrow 2006: 152, 174). By the time the period covered by this project begins, it has already been a developing process for a thousand years. Despite the long duration of the process and the fluctuations and nuances a closer look can add to it, we can still say that, in broader terms, the pattern stands, and was apparently hard to reverse once set in motion. Part of the Late Bronze Age in the Northern Levant also conforms well to this idea, with pottery becoming ever more standardized as an international elite culture develops, based on high-status materials. Although these were not the contexts for which the hypothesis was originally developed, the consideration of the creation of an elite culture in the process of emphasizing hierarchical social distinctions is valid and has also been suggested as a strategy for emergent elites (Parkinson and Galaty 2010: 16-17).

Intriguingly, even in the best-fitting periods these challenges remain, coming exactly from those subversive materials, like pottery, which are by nature less integrally limited with regards to their value and the potential investment in them (as anticipated by E.S. Sherratt 1999). There are also other cases that do not fit the pattern, suggested for the cases of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The first might even be classed as reversals of the entire pattern, first among which is the Aegean, as well as a highly distinctive Cyprus. Even parts of the southern Levant seem closer to the Aegean than the regions that surround them at points of the middle Middle Bronze and early Late Bronze Age. This exception in the southern/central Levant is based on increased painted decoration and on networks connecting sites to one another and their hinterlands across varying distances, using pottery and decoration in a more conspicuous way, as part of activities that are invested in, but not directly sumptuary. We see this, beyond the higher quantities of overall decoration, in the production of vessels created from the beginning as decorated and the conscious employment of decoration for complex signaling we see in the "juglet period".

The second departure from the pattern are specific challenges appearing in opportune occasions, despite the fact that the broader social structure conforms to the

above description of the imposition of hierarchical structures. This does not refer to heavily invested-in examples, such as Blue Painted pottery, but to hints of potential for increasing the presence of decoration through process that do not move from the top-down. An interesting case are the occasional flashes of decorated pottery we see in Middle Kingdom Egypt, particularly connected with planned settlements, which also show interest in decoration in other areas of life (as with fish dishes) and for acquiring imported decorated objects. It is intriguing to see this as a kind of resistance — a way to move within the existing social structure and practices while at the same time extending them. A closer dating of ceramic practices in Egypt has further potential to strengthen associations. For example, it would be interesting to see if this phenomenon appears close to the end of the Middle Kingdom, when other lines of evidence, such as private funerary stelae and sealing practices, indicate a greater potential for assertion (McGuire 1983; Routledge 2014: 30). The same phenomenon we see in parts of the Late Bronze Age northern Levant, and particularly those that are more in contact with the Mediterranean world and less connected to the large multi-national empires and their centres, deep inland. Places such as Alalakh and Ugarit have the opportunity, through trade and contact with other regions, or a strong local past with Mediterranean connections, to maintain contact with foreign objects and regimes of value and therefore a degree of openness and flexibility in the introduction and manipulation of material. Flexibility can also be read in the development and use of hybrid material categories, including skeuomorphic vessels, which both use and challenge the distinctions between objects.

Finding the 'why' and future directions

If we now, then, pull everything together, we can get hints of the deeper 'why's of decorated pottery. There is a strong relationship between pottery decoration and social structure. As a constantly generated, ever-present and hugely pluripotent material, it can be very responsive to the needs of its users, and therefore a sensitive indicator for those who study it. Moreover, certain configurations and combinations of quantity and quality are associated with specific social structures. Specifically, conspicuous peaks in the complexity of decoration can be associated with powerful, often centralized hierarchies, exemplified by the Bronze Age Palaces, which have the

means to create distinct enough quality rankings. This is most clearly seen in absence, through Cyprus: the different ceramic impression offered by this island, where, unlike any other area, it is difficult to distinguish clear peaks and valleys is a strong argument for a correspondingly unique social structure with the absence of clearly designated hierarchies, but instead with multiple active groups and configurations producing this "undirected" picture. This can create a self-reinforcing feedback loop, where there is diverse decoration available to be seized by different emergent groups, which once formed support and sustain diversity themselves, keeping the process in motion. When the form of complexity in social organization is combined with hierarchical structures, we have the potential for a pattern of occasional explosions in pottery decoration. These peaks in different occasions are not, however, identical phenomena, their differences stemming from the scale at which society is organized and the resulting characteristics of hierarchy and power. So, the peaks in New Kingdom Egypt and Neopalatial Crete can be attributed to similar reasons, but they are situated in very different contexts and employed in very different ways: one is a, partly accessible, extension of a preexisting, familiar practice stimulated by intense competition between multiple groups, involving a large part of society and the other is the creation of a centralized state, organizing and controlling its activities at a large (and single) scale, where activity external to this structure can be found at the margins.

The originally proposed association of social complexity with aesthetic simplification stands, for a specific kind of social complexity with reduced flexibility, and therefore low overall decoration, and for those societies that have the means to create and maintain it. However, this remains vulnerable to the subversive activities of social agents and groups, whenever an opportunity for greater access is presented and it occasionally creates the right conditions for decorative explosions, when pottery is drafted into the elite sphere of life. Moreover, we can distinguish two kinds of decorative complexity: one showing a pattern with occasional peaks, discussed above, and another which is more widely present and can perhaps be associated with diversity and openness in the absence or underplaying of hierarchical ranking. Finally, it is possible to say that between all these factors acting on decorative choices, we can see why Crete stands out so much: it sits at the crossroads of all necessary conditions: there is sufficient hierarchy and ability in controlling craftsmanship to produce extremely elaborate products, enough flexibility to maintain high overall levels of

decoration and comparatively wider dissemination even of the complex pottery, and at the same time a degree of insecurity, necessitating constant negotiation and providing incentive for investing in the tools of this negotiation in all areas of life, resulting in a combination of constant high quantities of decoration and further peaks in its quality.

There are many ways this project can progress. One potential direction would be to extend this research further in time, and look at the first millennium BC and the phenomenon of the re-investment in decorated pottery in the Aegean, both in its unique historical context and perhaps in comparison to the results of this work. We can also go deeper into the aspect of space, and examine closer some of the many regionally diverse ceramic traditions that were identified in the course of this research, and to which it has not been possible to give the full attention they deserve. Another direction would be to extend the comparative potential and study parallel processes, in cases where much work has been done on ceramic decoration and state formation, such as Mesoamerica. Finally, there are many ideas that informed this project and arose from it that have great potential for future examination, such as the social conditions of change and, especially, since it has been greatly neglected, the dynamics of stability. Above all, I believe that there is enormous potential in the detailed study of material in context and the integration of quantitative approaches through methods such as those followed here, and that this potential can be excellently applied to a material as diverse and as omnipresent as pottery, whose study is moving towards vibrant and exciting times.