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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE MYCENAEAN POTTERY IN THE COLLECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI, COLUMBIA

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The following notes on the Museum of Art and Archaeology's collection of Mycenaean pottery have been compiled by Drs. Elizabeth French and Penelope Mountjoy. The occasion which brought about this project was a seminar given by Professor William Biers of MU's Department of Art History and Archaeology at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens in 1990.¹

The collection comprises only fifteen vases²: seven stirrup jars, one jug, one lekythos, one feeding bottle, two pilgrim flasks, two alabstra and one pyxis. Yet they illustrate several of the more important issues of present research and form an excellent nucleus for the teaching and understanding of Mycenaean ceramics.

First, all are closed vessel forms and both from their types and their unbroken condition almost certainly come from tombs. Tomb vases are thought to have contained scented unguents, both liquid and solid, and food stuffs for the use of the dead on their way to another world.

Secondly, though in date they range from LHIII A1 to the end of the Mycenaean period, even with this small number they reflect the ceramic history of the Aegean. It is not surprising that the earliest vases in the collection date to LHIII A1; this is the period when a mainland style first spreads in Greece and the islands and when we see the first real expansion into the Eastern Mediterranean. Five vases can be assigned to LHIII A2/B1, phases which are often hard to disentangle as they form a continuum and in many ways the acme of mainland ceramics and their export. The succeeding LHIII B2 phase is not represented, a feature paralleled at many sites and one which taxes explanation. The LHIII C period is one where the work of the last thirty years has contributed greatly. Our ability to assign vases to the different phases of this period is the result, and they illustrate well our newly-won understanding.

The third characteristic is the possibility of assigning the vases to regional groups. Thus, stylistically they can be seen to come from the Argolid, Attica, the Eastern Mediterranean (as export market if not place of manufacture) and also from Crete. Our expanding knowledge of LMIII pottery, though not yet as extensive as of LHIII, is another result of recent scholarship.

The LHIII A1 alabastron (Fig. 1) is said to come from Thessalonika. The decoration of rock pattern is customary on this shape; the tall pointed central rock on each side is

reminiscent of the earlier LHII crested version and suggests a date not far removed from LHII³, since later versions have rocks of the same height all the way round.⁴ The vase has an unusual base decoration: instead of the concentric circles found on alabastra bases from LHIIIA1-IIIB, it has a tightly coiled spiral in the center of the base framed by concentric circles towards the edge of the base. An exact parallel can be seen on a straight-sided alabastron from Kambi Vigla on Zakynthos.⁵ The Zakynthos vase looks like a local product, but it cannot be said that our alabastron comes from Zakynthos on the strength of one parallel. It may well belong to a central Greek group of pottery: there are no parallels so far on the many extant alabastra from Thessaly, but our knowledge of north Boeotian and Phocian pottery is not extensive, so these areas cannot be ruled out as a source.

The alabastron (Fig. 2), a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Vermeule who acquired it in Athens and noted its connection to that from Agora Tomb 40⁶ (published originally by Mrs. Vermeule), can probably be assigned to LHIIIA1. The decoration of wavy band is common on LHIIIA1 piriform jars and alabastra. Of interest are the differences from the Agora example, particularly in the profile and the sparse linear decoration (including the absence of reserved lines on the rim) as well as the shallowness of the wavy band and the lack of accessory ornament (though this is, in fact, more usual than the filling ornament of the Agora example). It is possible that these differences, particularly of shape, indicate a slightly later date.

The LHIIIA2 Early juglet (Fig. 3) is a gift from Saul and Gladys Weinberg. These linear juglets were in use from LHIIIA1 until LHIIIC Late and are difficult to date out of context. This juglet, however, has the early type of handle current in LHIIIA1 and LHIIIA2 Early; the handle bulges out beyond the maximum diameter of the vase. An earlier LHIIIA1 example from Prosymna Tomb 34 has an even more bulbous handle.⁷ Good examples of the later version of the handle can be seen on the LHIIIB juglets from the destruction level of the palace at Pylos; the handles no longer curve outward but rise straight up from the body.⁸

The pilgrim flask (Fig. 4), though unusual in having a short neck and handles attached to the rim (they are also unevenly attached at the shoulder), is a shape well known in the Eastern Mediterranean in LHIIIA2 and such a source, of finding if not of manufacture, is likely for this example, as parallels for the eccentricities exist in the Pierides Collection on Cyprus.⁹

The stirrup jar (Fig. 5), which is the next in date, LHIIIA2/B1, illustrates the frustrations with material bought from dealers (i.e., no documented provenance). The jar is said to be from a tomb group found in the Hebron area, possibly Etoun.¹⁰ This vase

is rather a top-heavy example of FS 179, a shape found most widely in the Eastern Mediterranean and has only linear decoration. It thus bears all the hallmarks of a pot mass-produced, perhaps at a provincial center, for the local market.

More conical is the stirrup jar (Fig. 6), said to have come from Tanagra. This flattened version of FS 180 is not widely found in the Argolid though known from Boeotia and from Tanagra itself (Thebes Museum); the uneven spout probably indicates mass production. The flower pattern on the shoulder suggests a date early in LHIIIB1.

The stirrup jar (Fig. 7) is classed as FS 171 on the basis that its height is the same as the diameter, but it is slightly small and has the unbalanced proportions of a miniature rather than the sophisticated perfection of the standard type.¹¹ The shoulder decoration is exceptionally abbreviated, tiny rough versions of multiple stem. In date the vase is probably LHIIIB1, but might be slightly earlier.

The absence from the collection of any pottery datable to LHIIIB2, i.e. the second half of the thirteenth century, is once again typical. This period is somewhat elusive in tombs, partly because the pottery used is undistinguished and often hard to date and partly because in some areas it would seem that fashion or economic necessity now curtails the number of tomb offerings.

Six vases can be dated to LHIIIC, three to early in the period and three to the later phases. The large amount of new evidence for this period is summarized in P.A. Mountjoy, *Mycenaean Decorated Pottery: a Guide to Identification* (SIMA 73), pp. 133-200.

The lekythos (Fig. 8) is a shape that begins in LHIIIC Early and has been used as one of the type vessels of the period; it ultimately takes over from the stirrup jar, but not until the Submycenaean and the following Protogeometric phase. This lekythos is interesting in that its pattern seems to be a cross between the papyrus and flower motifs. The flower is a common LHIIIC motif on the shoulders of small closed shapes; the papyrus is very rare, but it does exist.¹²

The feeding bottle (Fig. 9) is a shape that changes little throughout the period of its use, after its development from the early Mycenaean version with the spout attached to the rim.¹³ It is almost exclusively a tomb shape, and the handle decoration dates it to LHIIIC. The handle is annular, that is, a complete ring (or rather oval) and painted on the top; two more circles are produced at lower levels down the handle, the pot probably being revolved on the wheel, while the brush was held stationary at the required height; these circles end up as transverse bars. This form of handle decoration began in LHIIIC Early. The spout of the bottle is painted monochrome in the earlier LHIIIA-B tradition, which suggests a date in LHIIIC Early for this vase, since LHIIIC Middle and Late feeding bottles have a rayed decoration round the spout.¹⁴

The handsome stirrup jar (Fig. 10) belongs to a LHIIC group which is particularly well represented in Attica. Vases of this group are very large, 18-20 cm high instead of the usual 10-12 cm, and have a globular shape. They are distinct from the smaller LHIIB globular stirrup jar FS 173, which also continues in LHIIC Early. The flower decoration of the jar suggests a LHIIC Middle date, since the flower is no longer the simple LHIIB-C Early version, as on the stirrup jar (Fig. 6), but is a combination of flower and bivalve shell, a common version of LHIIC Middle and LHIIC Late. The vase must belong to the beginning of LHIIC Middle, because it has a spiral beneath its base, a LHIIB feature which continues into LHIIC Early, but not much beyond it. The handle decoration consisting of a stripe down each edge joining at the base to form a U pattern is also a feature of LHIIC Middle stirrup jars in Attica and the Argolid; LHIIC Early handles are generally monochrome with a reserved triangle at the top in the LHIIIA-B tradition, as seen on Figures 5 and 6.

The stirrup jar (Fig. 11) is a beautiful example of the Argive Close Style of LHIIC Middle. The scale filled triangles and the belly decoration of semi-circles and zones of zigzag is typical of this style, which is above all a miniature style.

The largely monochrome body of the stirrup jar (Fig. 12) suggests an Argive provenance rather than an Attic one,¹⁵ since Attic stirrup jars, of which we have a very large number from the cemetery at Perati, are generally banded.

The pyxis (Fig. 13) is said to have been found with the stirrup jar (Fig. 12), but the best parallels come from Attica; indeed there are none from the Argolid, which would seem to be the provenance of Figure 12. Once again the lack of certain find spot is frustrating. The best parallels to the decoration come from Perati from Tomb 30a and Tomb 43.¹⁶ They are LHIIC Middle, but the very dark effect of pyxis (Fig. 13) suggests a LHIIC Late date. Indeed, the best parallel for the chequer pattern is found on a Submycenaean deep bowl from the Kerameikos.¹⁷

The last two vases we consider to be Minoan, but it is a measure of the lack of good information on LMIII that this is not as certain as could be wished. Moreover, Lady Waterhouse had considered and rejected this origin for the flask (Fig. 14).

The semi-circles of long bars used for stamens on flask (Fig. 14) are absolutely typical of Late Minoan IIIB painting and are in contrast to the short Mycenaean version, as on stirrup jar (Fig. 6).¹⁸ Indeed, the preference for these long bars was the basis for the later LMIII fringed style, where patterns were fringed with bars, a particularly good example being on a Minoan octopus stirrup jar from Ialysos on Rhodes.¹⁹

For the stirrup jar (Fig. 15) we are lucky to have a large body of material from the

Knossos North Cemetery and elsewhere for comparison. This allows a date of Subminoan to be assigned to this vase, which is an excellent example of the type. The decoration is typical of a large group of Minoan stirrup jars: the decorative zone is deep and generally has some form of triangle, in this case cross-hatched; the bars across the spout are a diagnostic feature.²⁰

PENELOPE ANNE MOUNTJOY earned the Ph.D. at the University of Bristol on her many publications concerning Mycenaean and Minoan pottery, which include the important study *Mycenaean Decorated Pottery* (Göteborg: 1986). She is presently working on a major study of regional styles in Mycenaean pottery and is on the faculty of the British School at Athens.

ELIZABETH BAYARD FRENCH received the Ph.D. at the University of London on *The Development of Mycenaean Terracotta Figurines* and earned the Diploma in Conservation from the Institution of Archaeology at the University of London. Published widely on Mycenaean pottery, Mycenaean terracotta figurines and on Bronze Age trade and exchange in the Mediterranean, Dr. French is presently Director of the British School of Archaeology at Athens.

CATALOGUE



Fig. 1. 77.295. Alabastron FS 84. Fine, very thin buff clay; reddish-brown to black matt paint. H. 5.0 cm, D. max. 12.9 cm. FM 32, rock pattern; spiral on base. Gift of Saul and Gladys Weinberg. Provenance Thessalonika. LHIII A1.



Fig. 2. 63.14. Alabastron, straight-sided FS 93. Light, well-levigated yellowish-buff clay, dull light cream slip; reddish-brown lustrous paint. H. 10.7 cm, D. max. 16.0 cm. FM 53, wavy band; two groups of three concentric circles on base. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. C.C. Vermeule III. Purchased in Athens. LHIII A1.



Fig. 3. 77.296. Jug FS 112. Fine buff clay; reddish-brown to black paint. H. 7.55 cm, D. max. 7.9 cm. Linear. Gift of Saul and Gladys Weinberg. LHIII A2 Early.



Fig. 4. 68.103. Flask FS 189. Fine yellowish-buff clay with black and white inclusions, slipped; dark brown lustrous paint, flaky. H. 10.9 cm, D. max. 9.3 cm. Vertical concentric circles with FM 64, foliate band in side panels. LHIII A2.



Fig. 5. 68.243.1. Stirrup jar FS 179. Fine yellowish-buff clay with mica and black inclusions, slipped; reddish-brown lustrous paint. H. 9.3 cm, D. max. 11.4 cm. Linear. Provenance said to be Etoun. LHIII A2/B1.



Fig. 6. 58.22. Stirrup jar FS 180. Light tan/buff clay, slipped; dark red-brown paint. H. 8.1 cm, D. max. 10.1 cm. FM 18, flower. Provenance said to be Tanagra. LHIII B1.



Fig. 7. 76.130. Stirrup jar FS 171. Yellowish-buff clay with mica and fine black inclusions, slipped; matt dark brown paint, rather worn. H. 12 cm, D. max. 10.2 cm. FM 19, multiple stem, curved. Gift of Mrs. Lyman Spitzer in memory of Ward and Marion Canaday. LHIIIB1.



Fig. 8. 64.69.4. Lekythos FS 122. Dull light yellow-orange clay with a few darker specks, soft and fairly smooth; dull cream slip badly worn in places; matt orange paint. H. 6.9 cm, D. rim 2.3 cm, D. base 3.1 cm. Flower/papyrus; vertical oval on belly opposite handle. LHIIIC Early.



Fig. 9. 68.104. Feeding bottle FS 161. Coarse yellowish-buff micaceous clay with small black, red and white inclusions, slipped; matt reddish-brown paint, chipped and cracked. H. 12.5 cm, D. max. 9.5 cm. Linear. LHIIIC Early. *Hesperia* 43 (1974), p. 532, n. 2, pl. 116.



Fig. 10. 64.69.3. Stirrup jar. Light buff rather gritty clay, smoothed surfaces; worn buff slip; dark brown paint shading to red-orange, also worn. H. 18.6 cm, D. max. 16.7 cm. FM 18, bivalve flower on shoulder, FM 61, zigzag on belly; spiral on base. LHIIC Middle.

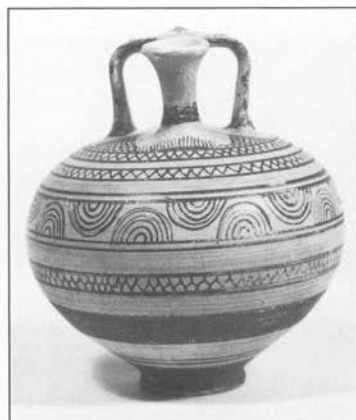


Fig. 11. 70.28. Stirrup jar FS 175. Close Style. Fine yellowish-buff clay, with fine black inclusions and some chalk which has erupted during firing causing pitting, slipped; lustrous dark brown paint, cracked and flaking. H. 13.5 cm, D. max. 12.0 cm. FM 42, triangle on shoulder and false mouth; FM 43, semi-circles and FM 61, zigzag on belly; reserved lozenge chain down handles; fringe under outer edge of spout. LHIIC Middle.

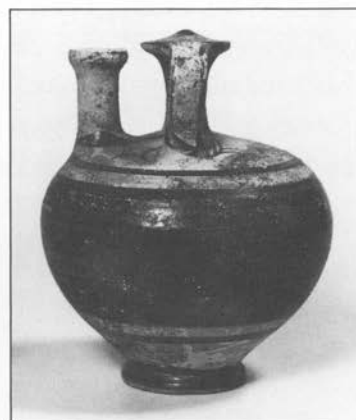


Fig. 12. 64.69.2. Stirrup jar FS 175. Dull yellow-brown clay with dull yellow-brown to grey-brown slip; dark brown to black highly lustrous paint. H. 10.3 cm, D. max. 7.5 cm. Hollow lip to spout. FM 18, bivalve flower in half circles on shoulder; FM 73 lozenge in quarter circles; spiral on false mouth. Said to have been found with Fig. 13. LHIIC Late.



Fig. 13. 64.69.1. Pyxis FS 12. Light yellow-buff clay, very well levigated; dull slip; dark red-brown to dark brown/black paint. D. base 16.0 cm, D. rim 14.5 cm, D. lid 16.1 cm, H. 8.0 cm. Two pairs of string holes near edge of base: central perforation on lid. Zones of FM 43, semi-circles, FM 44, concentric arcs, FM 56, chequer and FM 61, zigzag. LHIIIC Late.

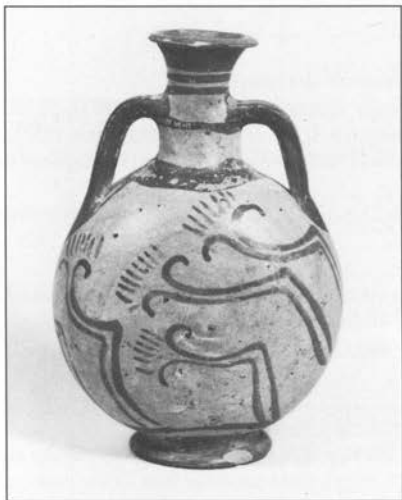


Fig. 14. 70.29. Flask. Fine yellowish-buff micaceous clay with black and white inclusions, slipped; lustrous reddish-brown paint, crackled and flaking in places. H. 11.7 cm, D. max. 8.1 cm. Flower. LMIIIB



Fig. 15. X-49. Stirrup jar. Micaceous grayish-buff clay with black and white inclusions, slipped; matt dark brown paint. H. 12.6 cm, D. max. 10.8 cm. Airhole opposite spout. Cross-hatched triangles on shoulder; barred handles and spout; two bands round false neck. Subminoan.

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS:

FS=Furumark Shape from A. Furumark, *Mycenaean Pottery Analysis and Classification*, Stockholm, 1941.

FM=Furumark Motif from Ibid.

MDP=P.A. Mountjoy, *Mycenaean Decorated Pottery a Guide to Identification* (SIMA 73), Gothenburg, 1986.

¹ Editor's note: the collection was originally catalogued by Lady Waterhouse at the request of Professor Weinberg; we have made full use of this catalogue which can be consulted in the museum files. The information on fabric and dimensions is taken from her text.

² Four were gifts, the rest purchases.

³ MDP, p. 41, fig. 43.1,2.

⁴ Ibid., p. 73, fig. 83.

⁵ *Archaiologikon Deltion* 28A (1973), pl. 107a. Base decoration not shown.

⁶ S. Immerwahr, *The Athenian Agora XIII: the Neolithic and Bronze Ages* (Princeton, 1971), pl. 59.2.

⁷ C.W. Blegen, *Prosymna: the Helladic Settlement Preceding the Argive Heraion* (Cambridge, 1937), fig. 260.685.

⁸ C.W. Blegen and M. Rawson, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia: I, the Buildings and their Contents* (Princeton, 1966), fig. 328, second shelf from bottom.

⁹ *Corpus vasorum antiquorum, Cyprus I*, 2, pl. 14.5-6, pl. 21.3. 10. Cf. V. Hankey, *Annual of the British School at Athens* 62 (1967), p. 144.

¹¹ For example, MDP, p. 106, fig. 128.1

¹² For example, on two LHIIIC Late stirrup jars from Asine. A. Persson and O. Frödin, *Asine. Results of the Swedish Excavations 1922/1930* (Stockholm, 1938), T.5.4, 7.18 (not illustrated).

¹³ See C.W. Blegen, Korakou. *A Prehistoric Settlement near Corinth* (New York, 1921), p. 53, fig. 73, left, for a LHIIIB example.

¹⁴ MDP, p. 188, fig. 162.

¹⁵ See Ibid., p. 189, fig. 247.1 for similar body decoration on a vase from Mycenae.

¹⁶ S. Iakovidis, *Perati to Nekrotapeion*, Vol. II (Athens, 1969), p. 259, fig. 112, 369, 460. Professor Iakovidis, the excavator of Perati, was shown a photograph of this vase. He did not consider that it originated at Perati.

¹⁷ W. Kraiker and K. Kübler, *Kerameikos: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen*, Vol. I (Berlin, 1939), pl. 61.770.

¹⁸ *Annual of the British School at Athens* 62 (1967), p. 348, fig. 6.2, 5, 15.

¹⁹ Ibid., pl. 89b, pl. 90b-c; C.B. Mee, *Rhodes in the Bronze Age* (Warminster, 1982), pl. 27.3.

²⁰ For other examples see A. Kanta, *The Late Minoan III Period in Crete* (SIMA 58) (Gothenburg, 1980), pl. 10.2; 33.4, 9; 83.8.

	MAINLAND	CRETE
c. 1575 B.C.	LHI	LMIA
c. 1500 B.C.	LHIIA	LMIB
c. 1460 B.C.	LHIIB	LMII
c. 1400 B.C.	LHIIIA1	LMIIIA1
c. 1375 B.C.	LHIIIA2	LMIIIA2
c. 1300 B.C.	LHIIIB1	LMIIIB
c. 1225 B.C.	LHIIIB2	LMIIC
c. 1190 B.C.	LHIIIC Early	
c. 1130 B.C.	LHIIIC Middle	
c. 1070 B.C.	LHIIIC Late	Subminoan
c. 1050/30 B.C.	Submycenaean	
c. 1020/00 B.C.		