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MISIS (ANCIENT MOPSOUESTIA) AND THE PLAIN OF CILICIA IN THE EARLY FIRST MILLENNIUM BC: MATERIAL ENTANGLEMENTS, CULTURAL BOUNDARIES, AND LOCAL IDENTITIES

Anna Lucia D'Agata

Summary

Situated within the sphere of influence of the major core areas of the ancient Near Eastern civilizations, the plain of Cilicia can easily be defined as a border zone where different systems interact. The early first millennium BC was a period of deep social and political interaction in the region which took place among groups of populations of different origins, including Luwian-speakers, Phoenicians, Cypriots and, probably, Greeks. Delimited by the Taurus and the Amanus ranges, and the Mediterranean coast, it constituted the Neo-Hittite state of Que, the capital of which was ancient Adana. The results of the cultural mixing are clearly visible in the material culture assemblages that are known from the major centres of the region, among which Misis, the site of ancient Mopsouestia, must be counted. The purpose of this paper is to focus on the phenomena of entanglement in Iron Age II Misis and their relevance for a better understanding of the making of the local social fabric. It also intends to show how a condition of extended multiculturalism contributed to shaping the cultural identity and the social practices of the Cilician city.

Situated within the sphere of influence of the major core areas of the ancient Near Eastern civilizations, the plain of Cilicia can easily be described as a border zone where different systems interact. Its main natural, geographical and cultural features match those listed as typical of a “peripheral region for which one or more core regions compete” (Chase-Dunn, Hall 1997, 37; Cline 2008, 8). Indeed, it lies along the north-south strip of land that for centuries represented the frontier zone between great empires: the Hittites and the Assyrians, the Neo-Hittite states and the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Byzantium and the Arab caliphates. The region, known in classical antiquity as Cilicia Pedias, corresponds to the broad alluvial plain stretching from the slope of the Taurus mountains to the coast facing the island of Cyprus. It has a long history of settlement thanks to its very fertile soil, easy access to a wealth of natural resources – including tall trees and the metal ores of the Taurus region – and the presence of east-west caravan routes providing a direct connection between inland Anatolia and the Syro-Mesopotamian countries.

To date, the history of the region has been interpreted using the concept of ‘bridge area’ or crossroad (De-sideri, Jasink 1990), a concept that offers a potentially rich key to exploring marginal regions, but that has proven theoretically weak (Salmeri, D’Agata 2011, CII-CIII). It has never been turned into a working tool that would help to explaining the local outcomes of the tangled sequence of events taking place in the region. Almost no effort has been made to identify either cultural features that could be considered exclusive or structural to the region, or, at a different level, supraregional features allowing us to compare it with areas with similar geographical connotations and historical developments.

It is thus perhaps no accident that the material culture and cultural identity of Iron Age Cilicia escapes easy classification, occupying an ambiguous position in the study of the ancient Mediterranean. This is clearly demonstrated by a quick glance at the *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Anatolia* (Steadman, MacMahon 2011). In the chapter on the Bronze Age (Gates 2011), Cilicia is extensively dealt with, and its historical processes are recorded in detail. However, in the subsequent chapters on the Iron Age in Anatolia, the plain of Cilicia is not even mentioned, and discussion is limited to the area around the Tigris and Euphrates. Though not openly stated, this difference may reflect the peculiar cultural affiliation of Cilicia during the Iron Age, when it appears to be culturally isolated from

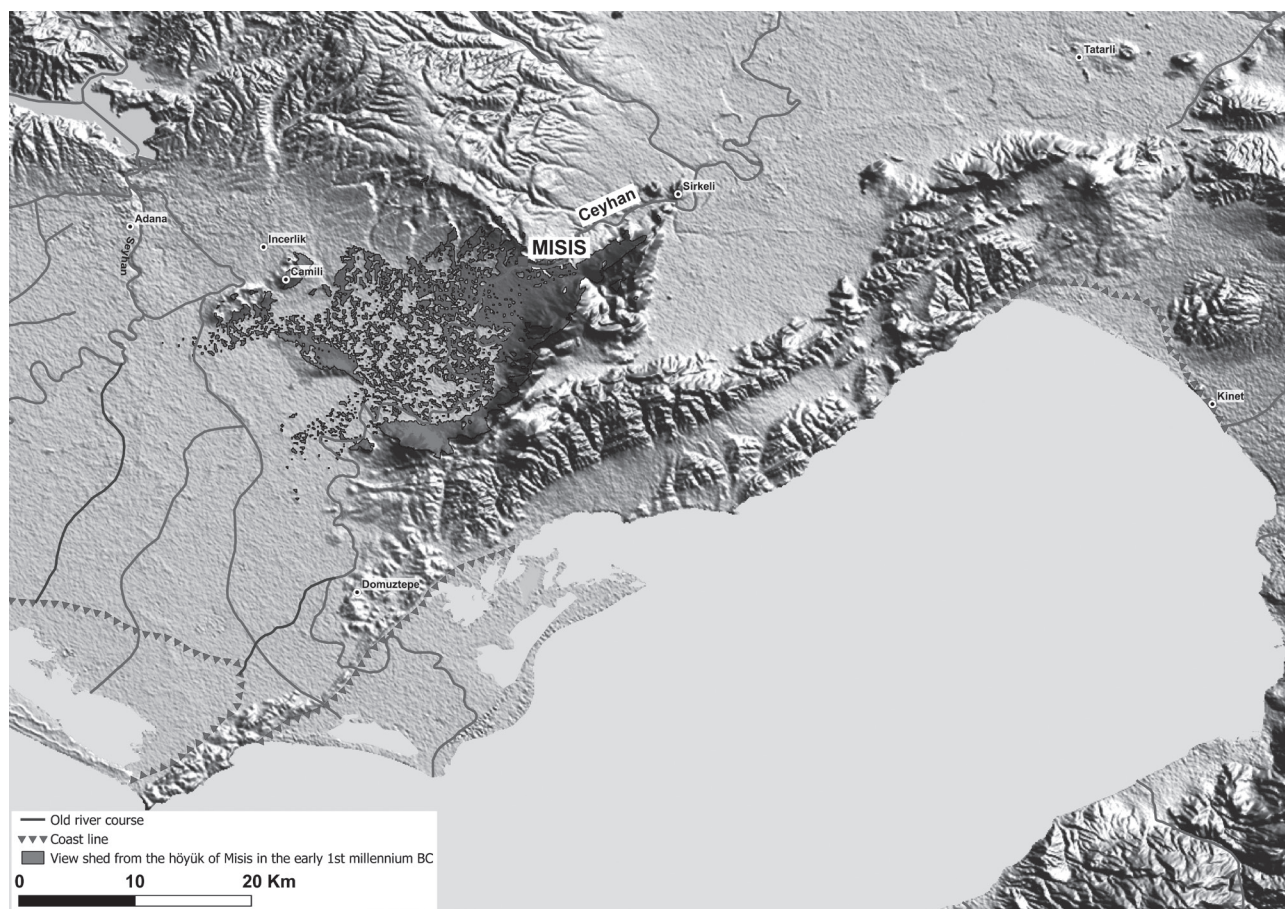


Fig. 1. Viewshed, in lighter colour, from the summit of the Iron Age citadel at Misis.

the neighbouring Anatolian regions. Indeed, its material culture appears to be well integrated with Cyprus, the Levant and the Aegean.

After the collapse of the Hittite Empire and the turmoil following this epochal event, in the north-east corner of the Mediterranean independent polities, known as the Neo-Hittite, or Syro-Anatolian city-states, emerged from the remains of the centralized state. They were characterized by their small size and by having one single city dominating the rest of the settlement pattern. Their material culture, however, appears to have been rather heterogeneous and the same can be said for their political organization, which does not seem to have developed simultaneously in all states or following a shared path (Osborne 2013). The plain of Cilicia, which in this picture corresponds to Que, was the region culturally most independent of the Neo-Hittite tradition. It is the only region of south-central Anatolia and northern Syria where a Neo-Hittite epigraphic tradition starts late, not before the eighth century BC, and without traces of a post-Hittite tradition (D'Alfonso, Payne 2016, 119). In keeping with this state of affairs, the plain of Cilicia developed a different material culture that presents such substantive affinity with the island of Cyprus that it is generally described by the term *Cypro-Cilician koine*.

Applied to non-linguistic phenomena by Mediterranean archaeologists, the concept of material or cultural *koine* – which is usually adopted without any theoretical framework to infer the existence of a vague cultural unity resulting from interactions of some type –, has been critically discussed in recent years in order to explain the processes that lie *behind* the phenomena indexed by the term. Kostas Vlassopoulos (2013, 19) has suggested that the *koine* model should be intended as a situation “in which individuals and communities come to participate in

a world of shared symbols and meanings.” Cultural koinai can be considered as an outcome of clearly articulated processes of globalization and glocalization, which produce neither a mechanical material koine nor a hybrid culture, but what can be defined as a zone of entanglement (Stockhammer 2012): “a product and a reflection of the broader unintended consequences of a series of very local intentional choices” (Dietler 2017, 25).

It is therefore legitimate to ask which processes taking place in Cilicia during the early centuries of the first millennium BC led to the formation of a new political entity and its material culture, and what role was played by the Cypriot polities of the Iron Age,¹ and perhaps also by contact with the Aegean.

During these centuries, the material culture of the region is difficult to reconstruct in detail because of the limited archaeological evidence. The mound of Tarsus-Gözlükule excavated by Hetty Goldman during the 1930s remains one of the best known and most frequently referenced sites (Goldman 1963). However, the stratigraphic uncertainty surrounding its ceramic assemblages for the centuries in question makes its archaeological evidence not entirely reliable. Also remarkable is the dearth of evidence for Adana, where the site of Tepebağ, presumed to be the capital of Que, lies almost unexcavated beneath the buildings of the modern city, which counts over 2 million inhabitants (Novák *et al.* 2017, 163-166).²

Partially remedying this situation, the stratigraphic sequence brought to light at Misis over the past 5 years represents an almost unique resource for the Iron Age of the Cilician plain. The excavations begun at the site in 2012 by an Italian team in collaboration with the Archaeological Museum of Adana and the Municipality of Yüreğir, have succeeded in uncovering the Iron Age citadel, which can be identified as one of the few important cities of the region. Misis is the only site for which we now have a detailed stratigraphic sequence associated with a significant number of Greek imports: it thus contributes significantly to shedding light on the nature of the relationship with Cyprus and the Aegean. Located about 25 km east of Adana, on the lower plain of the Ceyhan river and on the main east-west communication route through Cilicia, Misis is a large mound which on its western side reaches 56.63 m above sea level (Bini *et al.* 2018; Isola *et al.* 2017; Salmeri, D’Agata 2011; 2012). A brief archaeological survey carried out in the 2000s by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche and the University of Pisa has ascertained that in antiquity it was the central place in the area and, probably, the main port on the river Ceyhan connecting the Mediterranean coast to the Taurus region. The site can be identified with the Roman and late antique city of Mopsouestia, and possibly with the Pāhri of the Luwian and Neo-Assyrian sources. Our excavation at Misis currently focuses on the acropolis of the ancient city, which coincides with the citadel of the Iron Age (D’Agata 2017a; 2017b; 2019; Salmeri 2004). On these grounds, I believe that at least from the Middle Bronze Age, and up until the Middle Ages, Misis presents the features of an urban settlement. The Iron Age site has some unique characteristics within the region: it covers an area of over 30 hectares, lies 50 metres above sea level, is frequented at least from the Middle/Late Neolithic period and, even if intermittently, seems to have been settled for a long period of time. The visibility analysis, here calculated from the summit of the hill in the Iron Age (Fig. 1), shows that the territory controlled by the site extended mainly to the south, along the course of the Ceyhan and towards the Mediterranean coast. The settlement of Domuztepe on the eastern bank of the Ceyhan was probably the river port controlling the route between Misis and the coast in the Bronze and Iron Ages (Blue 1997; Taffet 2001). In the early first millennium BC, the citadel of Misis saw at least three main architectural phases of development, culminating in its abandonment.

Phase 10 marks a dramatic change in the use of public space that sees the complete obliteration of the preceding settlement and the construction, with a different orientation, of a monumental fortress (Building I), the southern front of which we have brought to light (Fig. 2). The building, which presumably occupied almost the whole surface of the hill, rested on walls sloping from north to south, with stone foundations of large and irregular blocks and upper courses of red and yellow mud-bricks. Its southern part included three compartments, of different shape and size, forming a defensive system of the casemate type. The compartments were found filled with clayish soil and

1 On the chronology of Iron Age Cyprus and its relationship to the standard sequence of ceramic types established by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition, Smith 2009, xvii-xviii.

2 As for the ceramic evidence from Sirkeli Höyük, see the article by S. Kulemann-Ossen and H. Mönninghoff in this volume.



Fig. 2. Misis Höyük excavations, Phase 10.

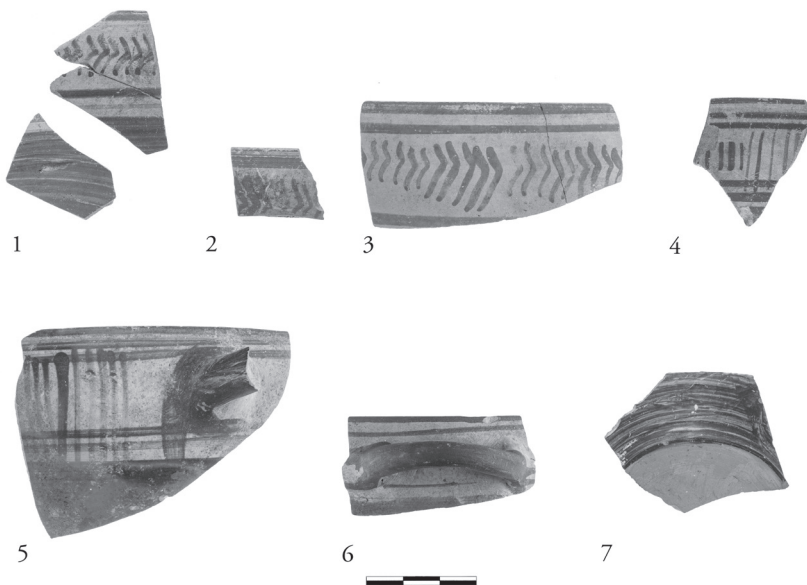


Fig. 3. Misis Höyük, Phase 10. Greek pottery. 1: 1044_7; 2: 1044_1; 3: 1077_1; 4: 793_55; 5: Vano I, pulizia_1; 6: 791_9; 7: Vano I, pulizia_2.

pottery sherds. Hitherto no floor has been reached inside the building, but a series of precise clues allows us to date its abandonment to around the end of the eighth century BC. The most important fact is that among the material found within the compartments fragments of Greek skyphoi and kotylai have been recovered, most of which seem to be of Euboean production and of LG II date (735-720/700 BC *ca*) (Fig. 3). On this basis, we can say that the filling of the casemates on the south side of the building was completed in the last decades of the eighth century BC, and it is likely that the fortress had ceased to function by the end of the same century. This circumstance is in keeping with what we know, from the contemporary written sources, about the Assyrian expansion in the region. Like the other Syro-Anatolian polities, by the end of the eighth century BC the plain of Cilicia was annexed to the Neo-Assyrian empire. Simultaneously, the Syro-Anatolian city-states effectively ceased to exist as a political or cultural phenomenon. Once abandoned, the acropolis of Misis no longer seems to have been frequented before the last centuries of the first millennium BC, when the city was refounded with the name of Mopsouestia. After its abandonment, Building I remained apparently as it was for centuries, until the end of the first millennium BC, when a quarter annexed to a sanctuary was built on top of the ruins of the construction.

The material found within the compartments of Building I includes a large amount of Iron Age II pottery, which presents significant affinities with Cypriot pottery. The main shapes documented are: two-handled bowls, plates, and conical lids in white painted and bichrome wares (Fig. 4A-B, E); black-on-red and red slipped plates (Fig. 4C-D); plates in plain ware (Fig. 5A); mortaria and two-handled kitchen pots (Fig. 5B-C); large storage vessels; storage jars with twisted rope imprints on the wall. Amphorae in white painted ware are also present (Fig. 6). The pottery repertoire appears to be less varied than the one documented in the preceding Phase 11. Among the Greek imports (Fig. 3), the most common vessel is the kotyle, mostly of the chevron type, which has substantially replaced the pendent semicircle skyphoi commonly found in Phase 11 layers (for the shape, cf. Coldstream 1977, 168; Neeft 1983). The presence of clay figurines of horses, and of horses and riders (Fig. 7), can be connected to the emergence, in the course of the eighth century BC, of cavalry, or of mounted soldiers, as a significant element of combat strategies in what must have been a politically unstable environment.³ At the same time, it also confirms the existence of an urban elite on which the art of horse riding conferred prestige. As for most of the ceramic classes documented, also in the case of clay figurines the parallels with Cyprus are significant (cf. Karageorgis 1993): horse and rider figurines dominate the repertoire of the small coroplastic of the Cypriot city states in the eighth century BC as a symbol of a prestigious activity reserved for elite groups.

Phase 11, which precedes the construction of the monumental fortress, corresponds to the period of the Iron Age that sees the greatest and longest-lasting development in the occupation of Misis and the surrounding region. During this phase, within which at least three subphases can be discerned, the southern slopes of the hill were terraced and the multi-room Building L was constructed (Fig. 8). The excavated area of the building amounts to about 216 square m and comprised at least ten rooms. The building has yielded rich assemblages of finds, and floor levels with complete vessels and fire installations. As in the later phase, the material culture appears to be closely linked to Cyprus, also including Levantine elements, and Greek and Cypriot imports. The pottery production, which is both fashioned- and made- on the wheel, is of a high technological standard, exhibiting a rich and very articulated repertoire, and reflecting aspects of a centralized organization. In Figs. 9-14, diagnostic ceramic materials have been arranged in order to show the most popular types. Storage vessels in coarse ware and fine plain ware constitute the most common classes, followed by white painted, and, very often, by kitchen ware. Painted tableware includes deep bowls and jugs in white painted and bichrome ware (Fig. 9A, C); plates in white painted and black-on-red ware (Fig. 10A-B); bowls and plates in red slip ware (Fig. 10C); bichrome closed vessels, and conical lids (Fig. 11). Craters, although relatively rare as a shape, are manufactured in white painted and bichrome ware (Fig. 9B). Few black slip closed vessels, of small dimensions are also attested. Plain ware exhibits a variety of types mostly including bowls, plates, and jugs (Fig. 12). Transport amphorae, of Aegean type, and *mortaria* are present (Fig. 13). Kitchen ware is dominated by the two-handled rounded-bottom

3 On the introduction of cavalry in the Assyrian army, Archer 2010.

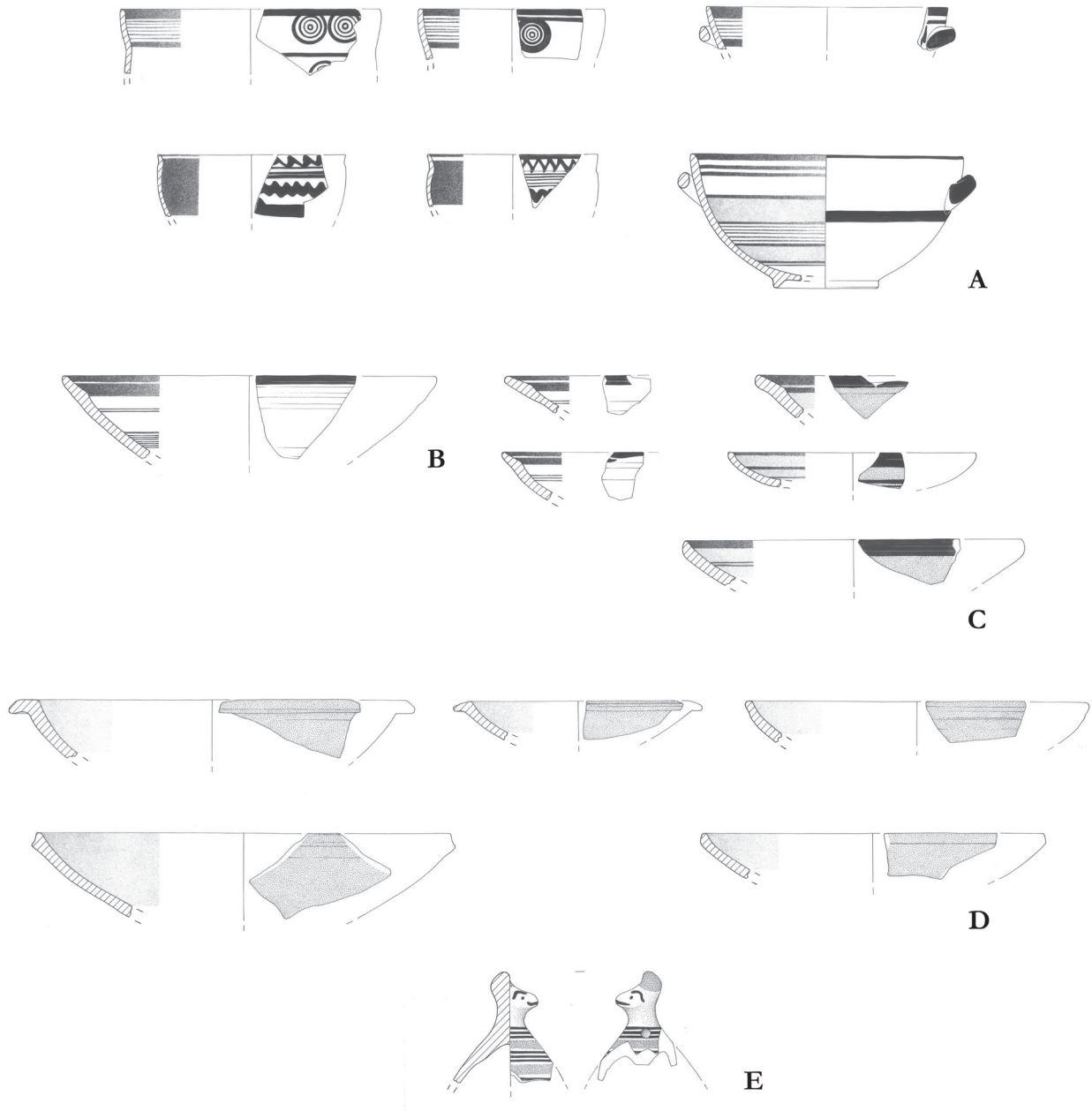


Fig. 4. Misis Höyük, Phase 10. A: deep bowls in white painted and bichrome ware; B: plates in white painted ware; C: plates in black-on-red ware; D: plates in red slip ware; E: conical lid in bichrome ware. 1:4.

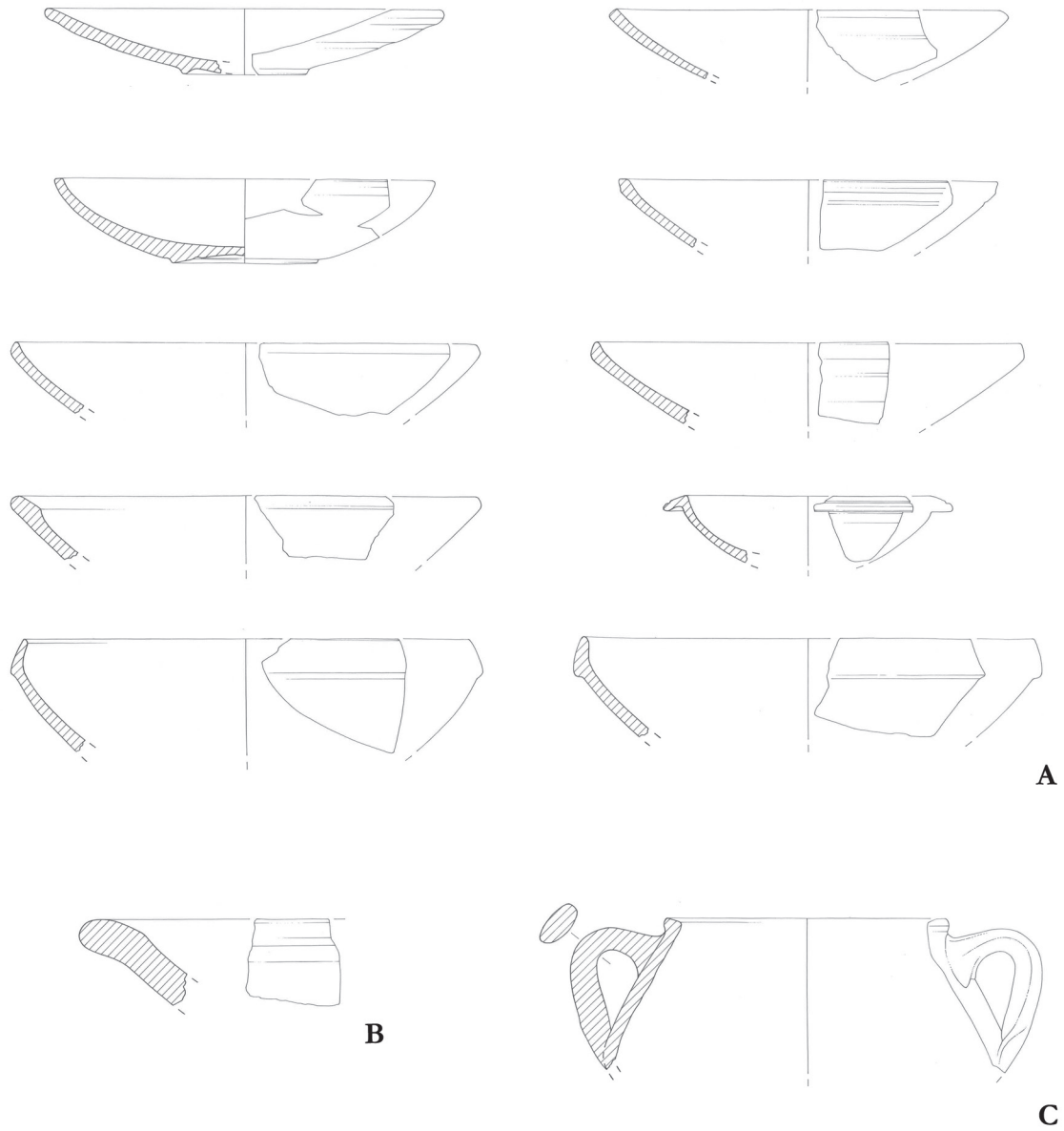


Fig. 5. Misis Höyük, Phase 10. A: plates in plain ware; B: *mortarium*; C: two-handled kitchen pot. 1:4.



Fig. 6. Misis Höyük, Phase 10. Amphora in white painted ware.



Fig. 7. Misis Höyük, Phase 10. Clay figurine of horse and rider in white painted ware.

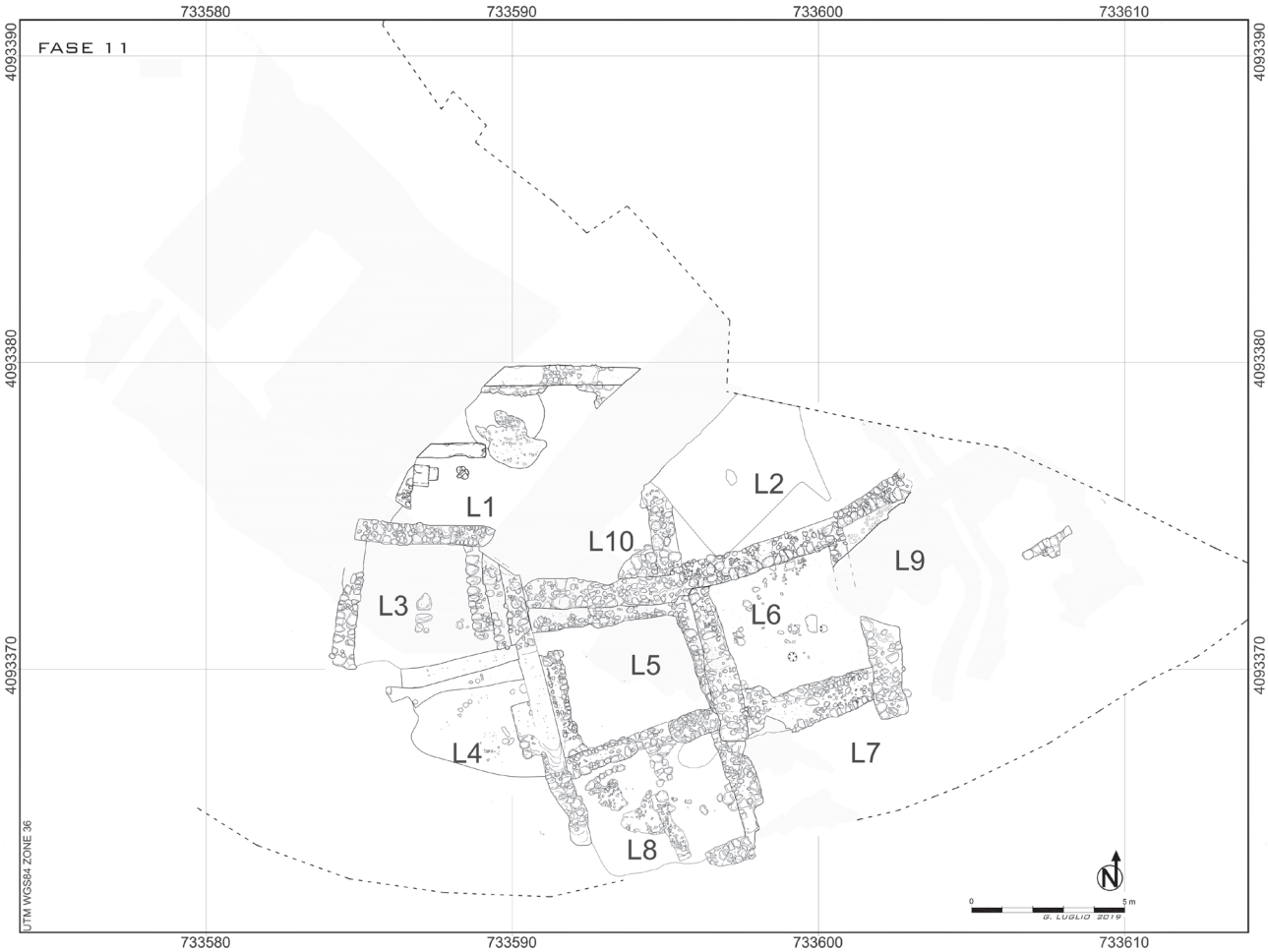


Fig. 8. Misis Höyük excavations, Phase 11.



Fig. 9. Misis Höyük, Phase 11. A: deep bowls in white painted and bichrome ware; B: craters in white painted and bichrome ware; C: jug and pyxis in white painted ware. 1:4.

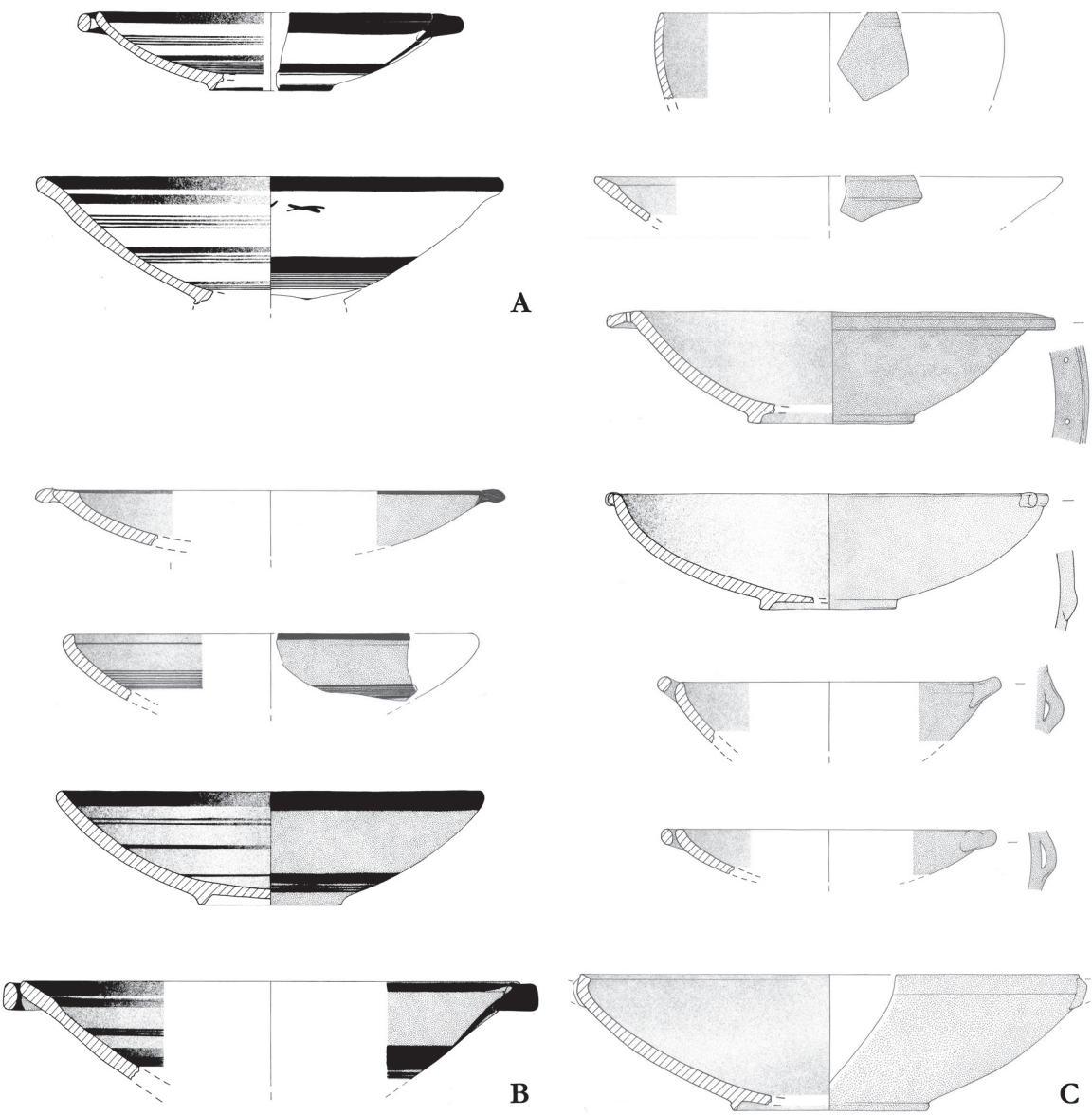


Fig. 10. Misis Höyük, Phase 11. A: plates in white painted ware; B: plates in black-on-red ware; C: bowls and plates in red slip ware. 1:4.

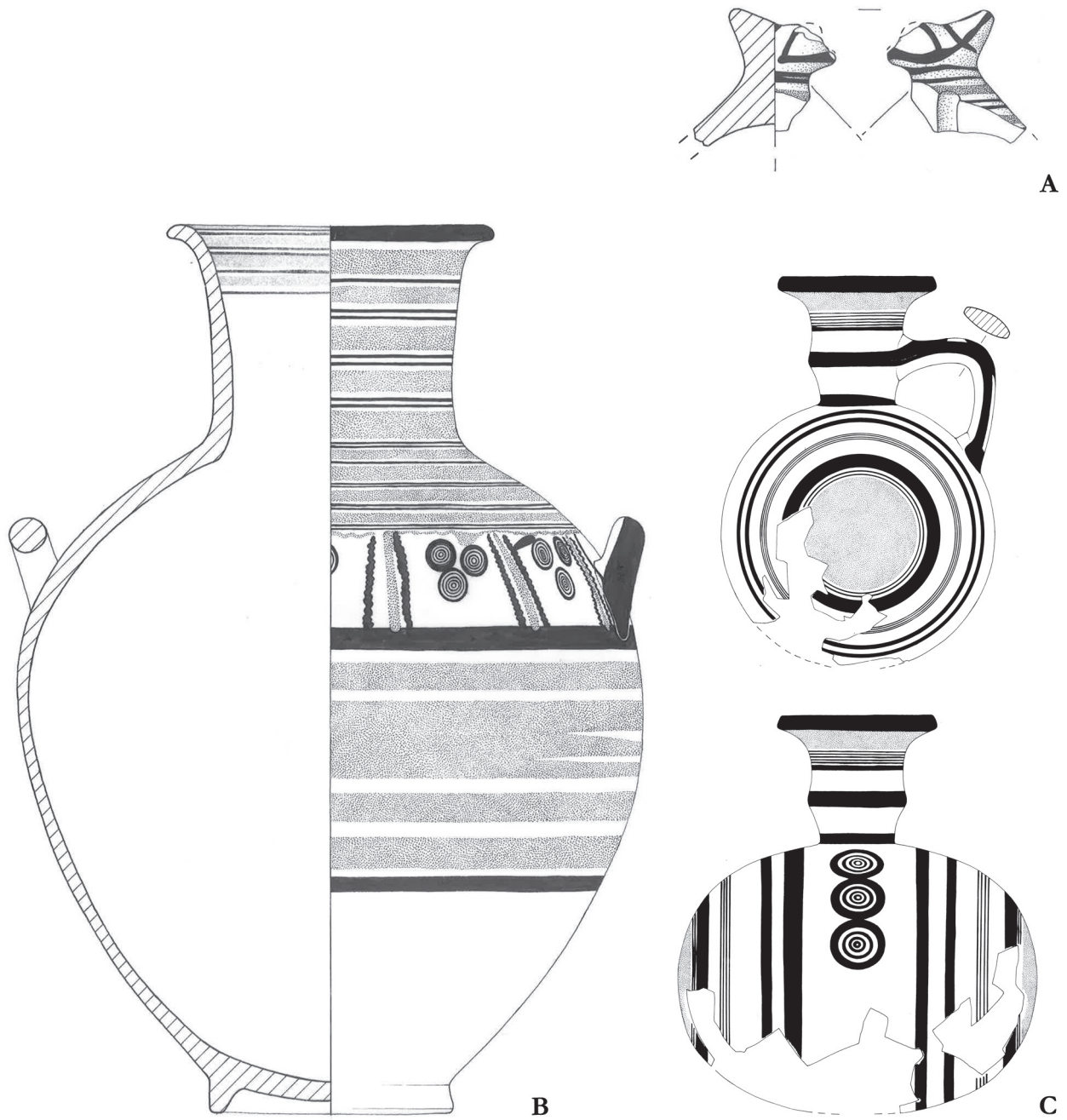


Fig. 11. Misis Höyük, Phase 11. A: conical lid in bichrome ware, 1:2; B: amphora in bichrome ware, 1:4; C: barrel jug in bichrome ware, 1:4.

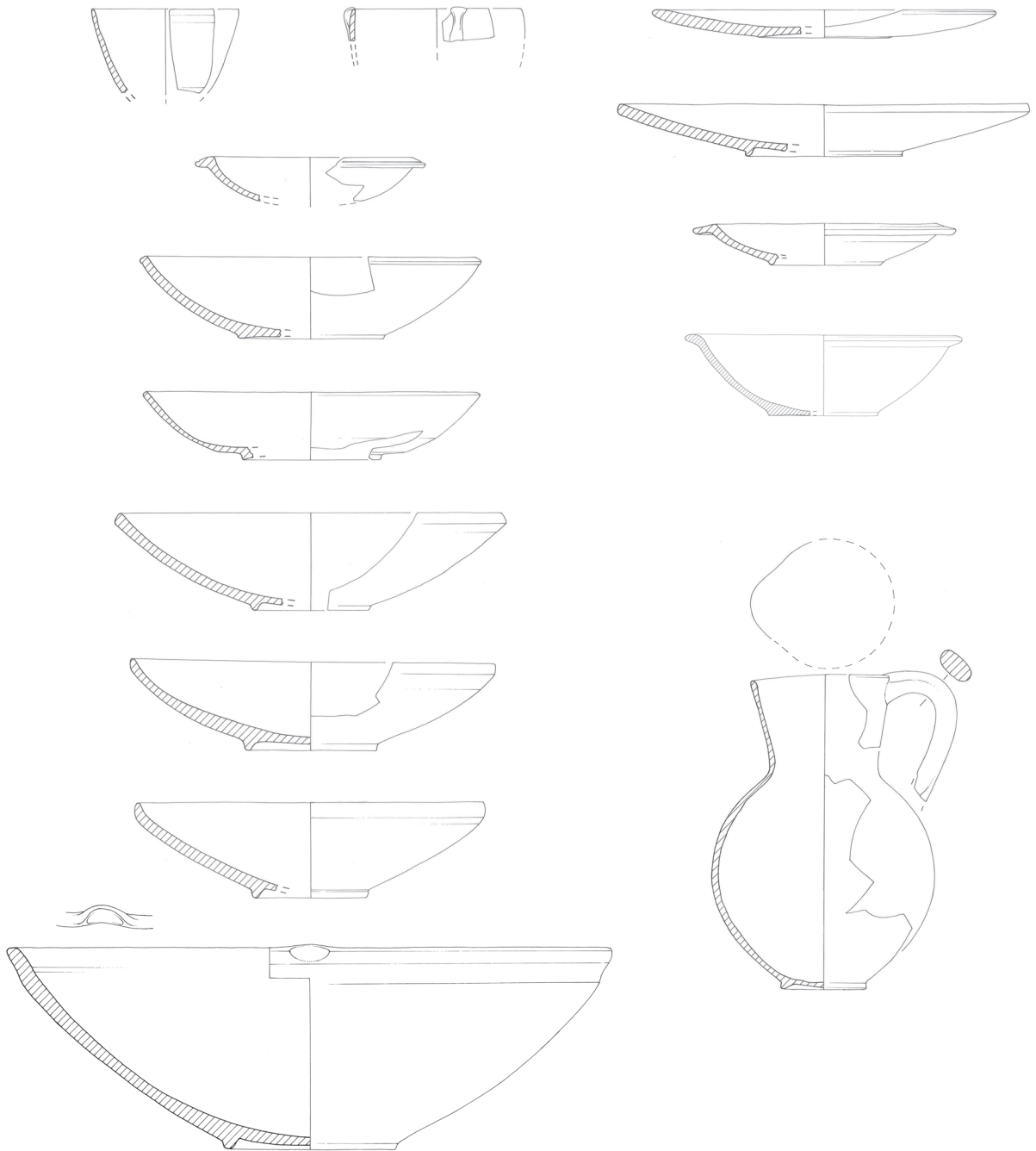


Fig. 12. Misis Höyük, Phase 11. Bowls, plates and jug in plain ware. 1:4.

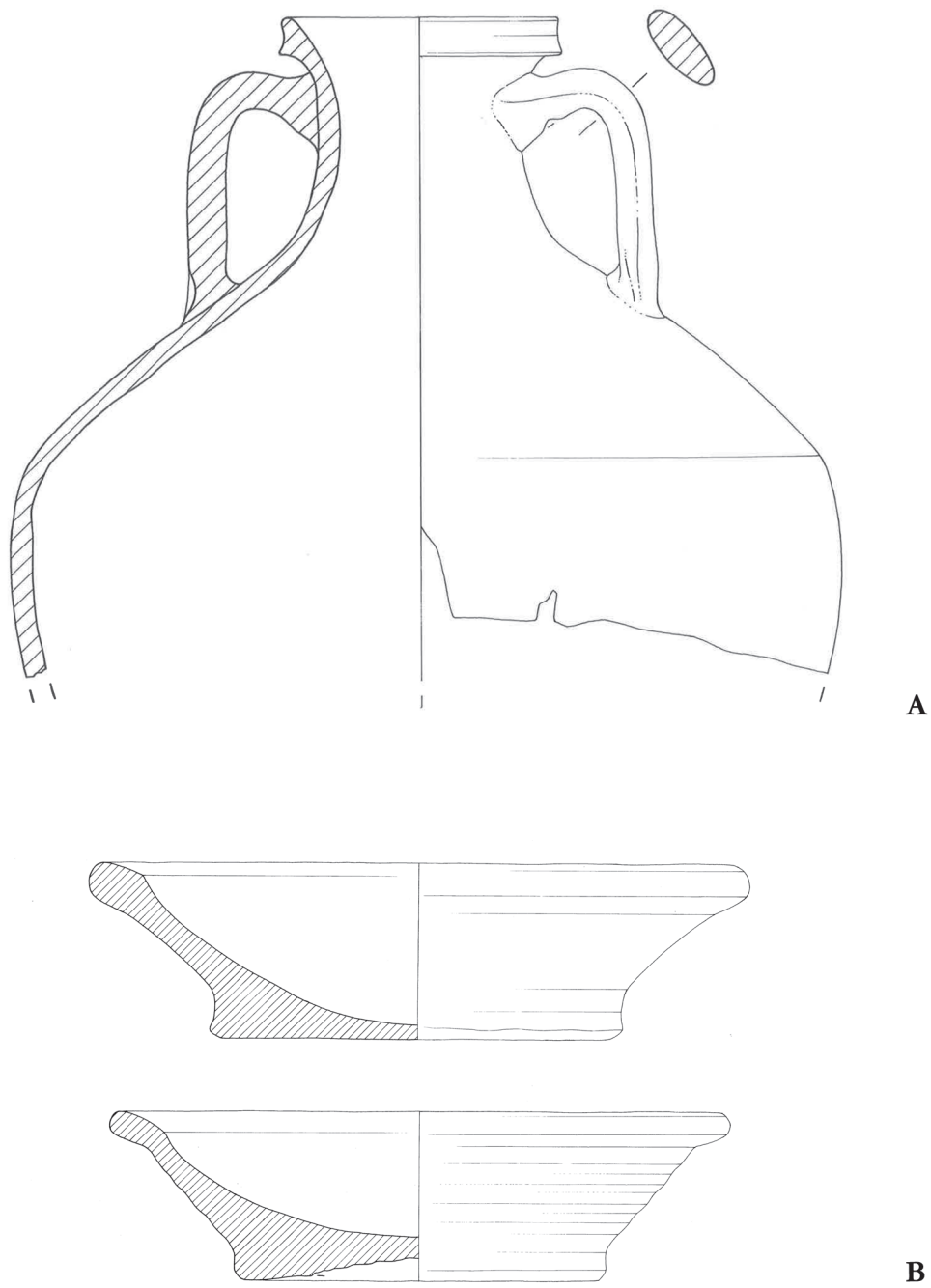


Fig. 13. Misis Höyük, Phase 11. A: transport amphora; B: *mortaria*. 1:4.

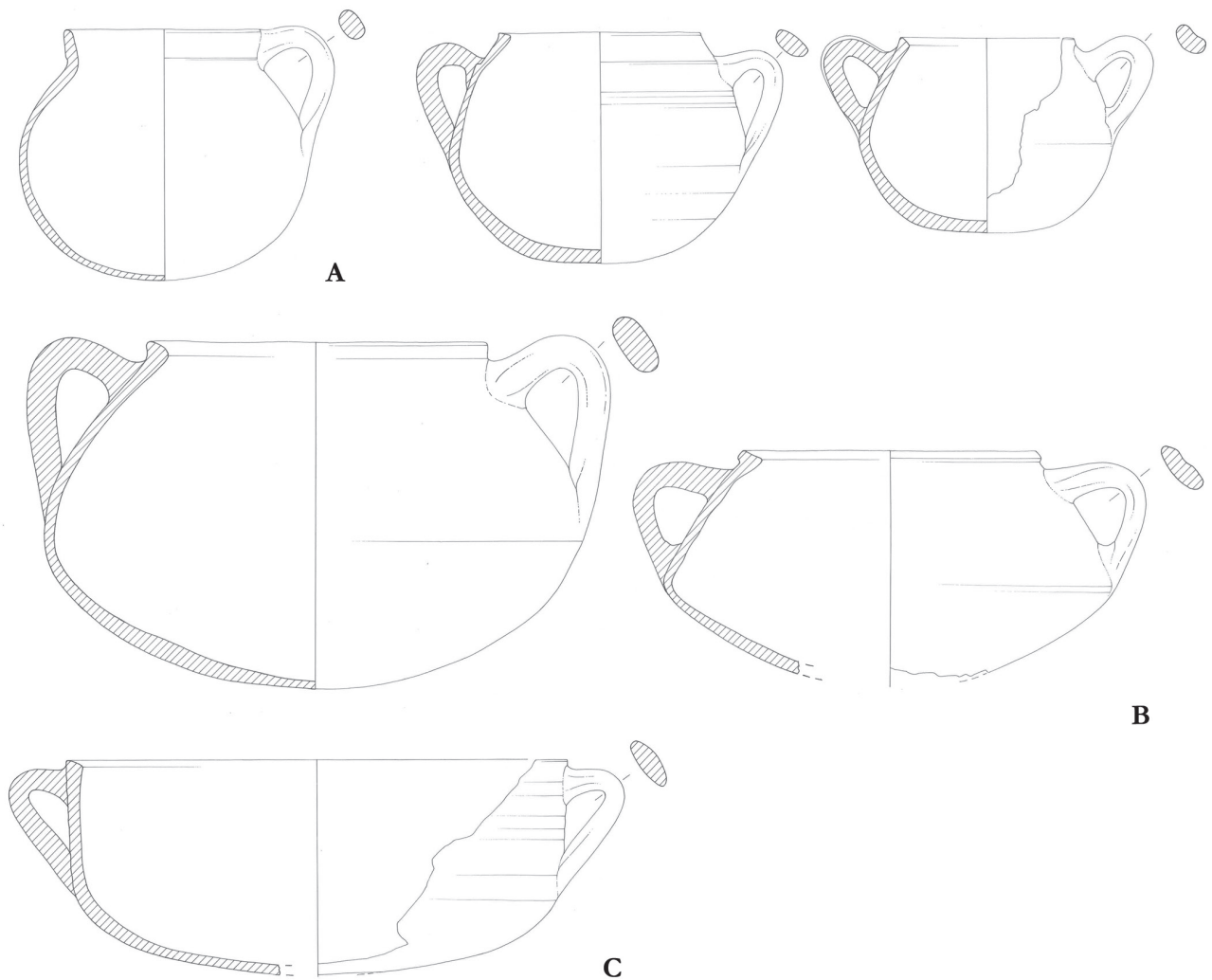


Fig. 14. Misis Höyük, Phase 11. Kitchen ware. A: one-handed pot; B: two-handed pots; C: basin with at least two handles. 1:4.

pot, but also includes smaller one-handed pots, and large and low basins with at least two handles (on Misis kitchen ware cf. D'Agata, Cannavò 2019) (Fig. 14). Greek pottery primarily consists of fragmentary pendent semicircle skyphoi (roughly corresponding to Kearsley's types 5 and 6, cf. Kearsley 1989) of apparently Euboean production, and has been collected in almost all the excavated levels of Phase 11 (Fig. 15). Also present are a fragment of plate decorated with pendent semicircles (cf. for the shape Coldstream 1995, 189, fig. 2) (Fig. 15.1), the handle of a monumental crater, apparently of Attic production and MG II date (cf. *e.g.* Coldstream 1995, 188, fig. 1.1) and a fragment of bird skyphos (cf. *e.g.* Verdan, Kenzelmann Pfyffer, Léderrey 2008, 79, no. 165, pl. 40) (Fig. 15.2). Whilst the imports from Greece are mainly vessels for individual consumption, the few imports identified from Cyprus almost exclusively consist of small slow-pouring vessels, *i.e.* juglets in black-on-red ware, which seem to have been produced by the workshops of the city of Paphos as containers for scented oils or perfumes (cf. D'Agata 2019, 46, fig. 3). On the basis of the latest Greek imports, Phase 11 should be at least coeval with the first part of the Late Geometric period (LG I, 760-735/730 *ca.*).

To get an idea of the ratio of local to imported material, in room L2 measuring over 30 square metres (7.61x 5.70 m), in the layers belonging to the collapse, the floor and an adjacent refuse dump, the fragments of at least 18 Greek vessels were recovered, which in percentage terms represent less than 1% of the entire ceramic assemblage. However, room L2 was not fully excavated since its southern end turned out to have been cut by later structures while its northern part lies well beyond the northern limit of the excavated area. As such, the number of imported materials was probably larger than that indicated.

Moving on to the earliest Iron Age occupation at Misis, it currently consists of *Phases 12-13*. In the area later occupied by the terraced buildings, remains of room M1 (Fig. 16) belonging to an earlier construction have been identified, as well as a couple of circular structures, or siloi, with organic material on their bottom, small clay installations, and proliferation of pits, which have yielded a large quantity of grindstones and stone tools.

These structures seem to have been located within an open-air space destined for production activities, which we should imagine as in the vicinity of buildings also lying beyond the limits of the excavated area. The associated ceramic material is stylistically comparable to the Cypro-Geometric III/Cypro-Archaic I. The few and very fragmentary diagnostic materials include deep bowls, plates and craters with vertical wall in white painted ware (Fig. 17 A-C); black-on-red bowls, plates and craters (Fig. 17D); bichrome barrel jugs; two-handled kitchen pots (Fig. 17F). Deep bowls and craters in a gritty fabric, probably footed, decorated with concentric circles and panel motifs, may have also been part of the same phase assemblage, as well as some, although rare, Greek imports. Considering that there is no gap in occupation, Phases 12-13 should be dated to the first decades of the eighth century BC, probably extending over the end of the ninth century BC.

To date, Greek imports from Phase 10 and 11 of the Misis citadel amount to the remains of at least 200 individual vessels. They are limited to fine ware and consist of a rather restricted range of shapes connected to eating and drinking. Skyphoi and kotylai make up the bulk of the pottery, with few examples of different shapes. The chronological range covers a large part of the eighth century BC, and Euboea seems to have been the main source of imports. Alongside the imports, some imitations of skyphoi in different ceramic classes (bichrome, white painted and black-on-red) have been identified, reminiscent of similar Cypriot vessels produced in imitation of Greek skyphoi (Coldstream 1979; Vacek 2012) (Fig. 18).

The nature and origin of the early Greek imports at Misis are similar to those known for Cyprus (Crielaard 1999; Luke 2003). However, concerning the distribution pattern, there are two main differences: in Cyprus, early Greek imports have mainly been found in funerary contexts and sanctuary sites, whilst at Misis the archaeological evidence comes from a settlement area: this fact may be related to the small number of Early Iron Age settlements hitherto excavated on the island. More interestingly, at Misis genuine imports and imitations of Greek skyphoi have been found in the same archaeological contexts. Even if we assume that at Misis imports were restricted to

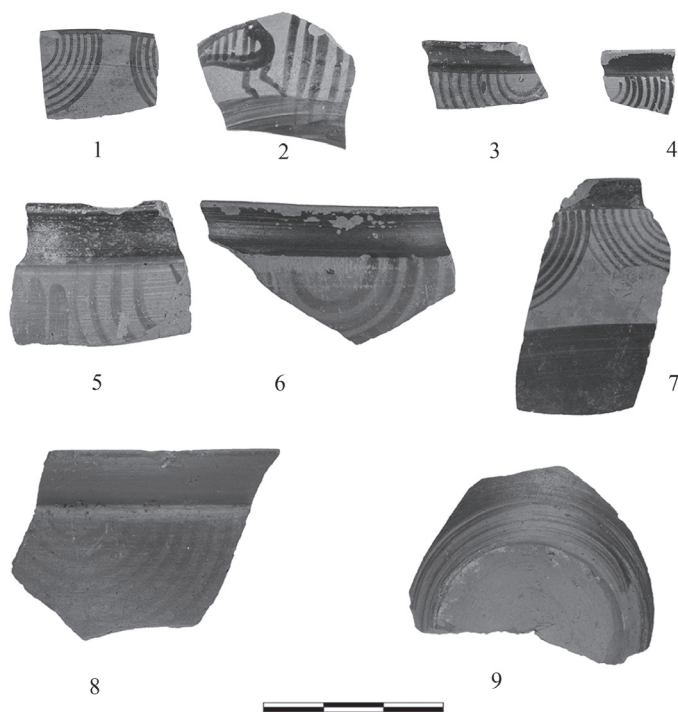


Fig. 15. Misis Höyük, Phase 11. Greek pottery. 1: 1617_1; 2: 997_3; 3: 1591_1; 4: 1782_1; 5: 837_1; 6: 1617_2; 7: 1757_4; 8: 1769_3; 9: 1674_1; 10: 1621_1.



Fig. 16. Misis Höyük, Room M1 (Phases 12-13).

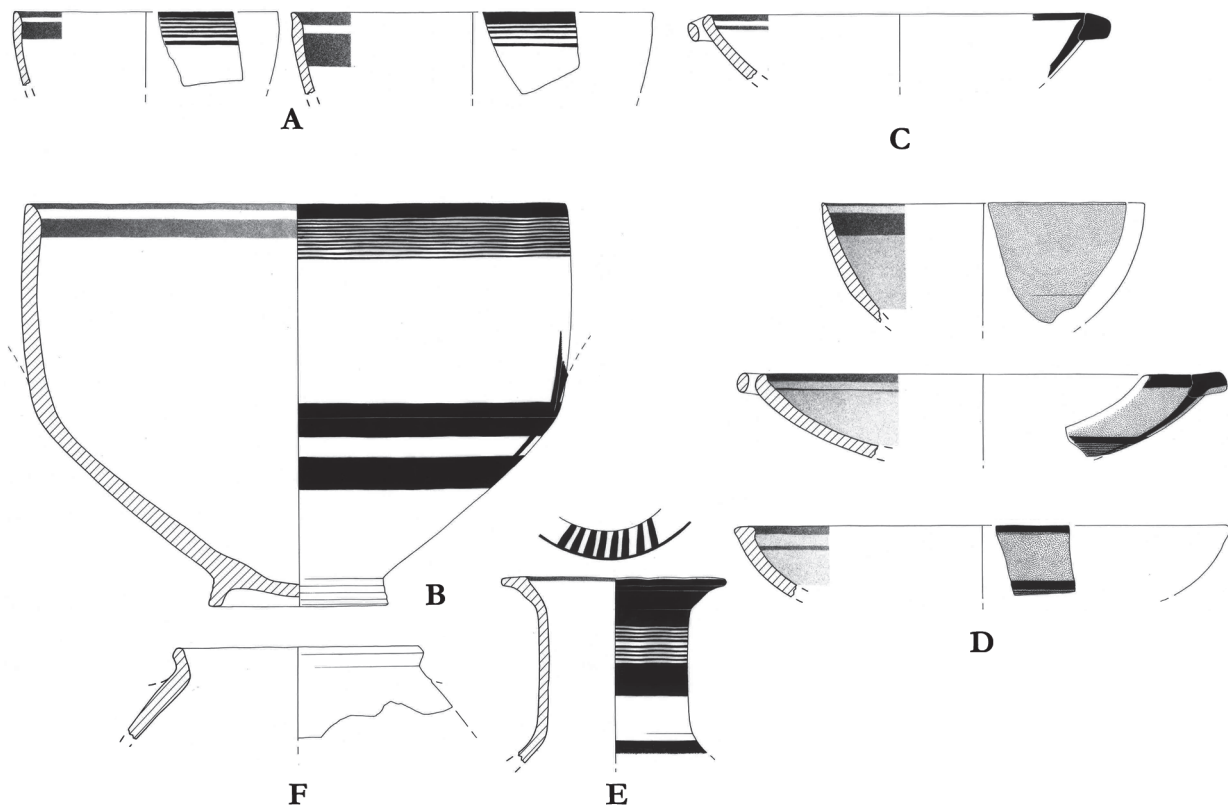


Fig. 17. Misis Höyük, Phases 12-13. A: deep bowls in white painted ware; B: crater in white painted ware; C: plate in white painted ware; D: bowls and plates in black-on-red ware; E: amphora in white painted ware; F: two-handled kitchen pot. 1:4.

high-status individuals using the premises of the citadel, the association of imports and imitations in the same contexts is unknown in Cyprus, where these two categories of goods had different circulations: the former were restricted to capital cities and to members of the local elite, whilst the latter are found in the northern part of the island, which has failed to produce any genuine imports. This might imply that in settlement contexts the influx, and probably the meaning, of imported tableware and its imitations was governed by different social mechanisms.

Thus, the first questions are: how did Greek vessels arrive at Misis and what function did they have within the context of elite material culture. As Nicholas Coldstream pointed out long ago, the Greek pottery found on Cyprus was linked to the aristocratic habit of feasting. The archaeological evidence available for Misis confirms that Greek vessels were imported to serve as components of elite feasting assemblages. Without wishing to discuss all the aspects of the symbolic value attached to foreign imports here, I would like to stress that the quantity of Greek imports in Misis is currently not very different from that found *in the whole island of Cyprus*, amounting to 170 units, and suggests that the symbolic value of the vases might be different from that reconstructed for Cyprus. In other words, in a peripheral area like Cilicia the use and display of Greek tableware and its imitations became a powerful tool in a social strategy that intended to communicate social distinction, and probably also to create or maintain a group identity.

The old question of whether or not the Euboeans were responsible for distributing ceramics inevitably arises. In other words, what sort of situation should we reconstruct: a special relationship between Euboea and Iron Age Misis, or between Misis and some of the Cypriot polities, which may have been responsible for the distribution both of Greek pottery and of local imitations? The nature of the Greek pottery found in Cilicia seems to reflect the situation known for Cyprus. This observation might in itself imply that the influx of Euboean ceramics at Misis was connected to a special relationship that the site had established with some Cypriot polities. But the peculiar characteristics of the material culture and in particular the entire ceramic assemblage of Misis allow us to broaden the scope of this study.

Firstly: Cypriot pottery was also exported from Cyprus to the main cities of the Levant (cf. *e.g.* Georgiadou 2018), but the technological and stylistic affinities between the ceramic production of Misis and the plain of Cilicia during the eighth century BC and that of Cyprus currently represent a phenomenon not equalled elsewhere. Limiting our discussion to Misis' ceramic production, it exhibits unequivocal affiliations to the Cypriot production with strong stylistic and technological similarities. It is helpful to compare the ceramic repertoire from Misis with that considered typical of Tell Taynat, the capital of the state of Palastin/Patina/Unqui, east of the Amanus, in the same centuries, *i.e.* the ninth and eighth centuries BC. At Tell Taynat the pottery assemblage, typically Levantine, is based on red slipped vessels, common ware and cooking pots. Cypriot-style pottery is present, both imported and locally produced, and includes white painted and bichrome bowls, barrel jugs, and small juglets, *i.e.* vessels for pouring and consumption of liquids. Imported pendent semicircle skyphoi complete the repertoire of tableware (Osborne 2013, 782, fig. 4). In Tell Taynat, therefore, it appears that what was imported was the feasting assemblage reserved for the local elites (Karacic, Osborne 2016).

By contrast, at Misis the entire range of the Iron Age tableware seems to be mostly local, with the notable exception of the drinking vessels of Greek manufacture. That the ceramic production at Misis was prevalently local is suggested by our macroscopic examination of the materials. The archaeometric project currently underway on the Iron Age pottery from Misis will allow us to check this hypothesis using petrographic and chemical analyses (cf. for example D'Agata, Cannavò 2019). However, it is worth remembering that the contemporary evidence known for other sites in Cilicia leaves no room for doubt that at least much of the pottery in Cypriot style during the early first millennium BC was mostly produced locally (Hodos, Knappett, Kilikoglou 2005, 68-69, 81; Bouthillier *et al.* 2014): this hypothesis raises some basic problems that have never been dealt with systematically.

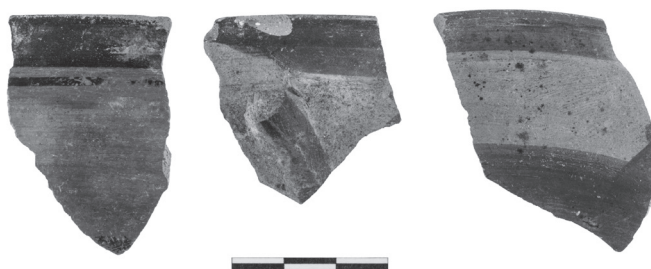


Fig. 18. Misis Höyük. Fragments of skyphoi in white painted and bichrome ware.

First, when were techniques, formal repertoires and decorative styles of pottery extraneous to the local tradition but typical of the Iron Age Cypriot polities introduced to Cilicia? Secondly, where did the craftsmen involved come from and, last but not least, what historical dynamics led to the large-scale adoption of a foreign technology for local ceramic production?

The introduction of new technologies and instances of borrowing in the common stock of know-how create new environments favouring variability and innovation, and facilitate the appearance of new objects that document the dialectics between producer and material culture. It is generally agreed that a technological tradition can develop within a more extensive social identity featuring components that are both 'ethnic' and resulting from the social hierarchy, and can reflect different patterns of exchange, production and consumption. These observations should caution us against considering the pottery production of Cilicia in the Iron Age as a uniform package produced in imitation of contemporary Cypriot wares, paying attention merely to the visual aspects of the pottery. Regional patterns of production and consumption, alongside the act of crafting as a social practice able to incorporate foreign features and negotiate identities, may be socially important variables, especially in a multicultural frontier region like Cilicia. At the beginning of the first millennium in Cilicia, mainly a region of Luwian speakers, groups of diverse origins must have been present since the refoundation of its cities after the Bronze Age. The seasonal arrival of nomadic people from the Amanus range into the Ceyhan plain is a structural feature of the region, and the presence of Aramaeans in Cilicia can be taken for granted. The close links in material culture with Cyprus prove that Cypriots, and probably also Greeks, circulated in the area. Finally, at least from the second half of the eighth century BC, the bilingual inscriptions in Luwian and Phoenician from Karatepe and Cineköy indicate the political importance of the Phoenician component in the domestic affairs of the region, which at that time seems to have been unified under the Adana royal dynasty of Muksas/Mopsos (Hawkins 2000, 44-45).

With the introduction to Cilicia of Cypriot-style ceramics, a completely new tradition with respect to that known for the region between the end of the Bronze Age and the start of the Iron Age is established, and one of the production spheres most closely connected with social identity is revolutionized. In other words, we are dealing with the development, in a different geographical context, of a technological tradition imported almost in its entirety. According to Valentine Roux (Roux, Rosen 2009; Roux 2015), a social group can *never* completely and independently appropriate a different technological system since technological systems and social identity are closely linked: they are transmitted only through the practice of apprenticeship and contact between different groups. Technological traditions can be seen as basic features of identity: they provide crucial support for the study of socio-cultural meanings and also of interregional exchanges, whereas attributes such as shape, style and decoration are secondary characteristics of identity.

Archaeological data and anthropological models concur to suggest that in the ninth and eighth centuries BC in the plain of Cilicia – in the area stretching from Tarsus to Kinet Höyük – the adoption of Cypriot ceramic styles and manufacturing techniques took place thanks to the presence of specialized Cypriot potters capable of establishing and developing a 'different' system in a new geographical context. An artisanal tradition may proliferate extensively and very rapidly through a few masters who teach and disseminate their know-how, in a process that combines individual mobility and the training in loco of specialized craftsmen, and may explain the rapid spread of a new technological system. In this way, local artisans were taught and trained, and they in turn passed their craft onto other local artisans. Detailed technological studies and archaeometric analyses of the local pottery will give us a better understanding of what forms of proliferation were taking place at Misis during the Iron Age. In any case, new social practices were also adopted, especially those linked to the use of the new repertoire, alongside a new economic system whose fundamental features we are not yet able to define. We have already said that at Misis pottery production reflects a high level of specialization and appears to be closely linked to the main Cypriot towns of the eastern and southern coast. However, it also reveals preferences for shapes, details of manufacture and style, and technological choices that diverge from the mainstream of the Cypriot tradition. Among the many possible examples, we shall mention just two. An interesting case of imitation concerns a crater (?) (1609_1) from the floor of Room L2 (Fig. 19). Fabric, shape and linear decoration belong to a technological and stylistic context that we could describe as local, but the decorative motif, a frieze with meander pattern, derives from the Greek Geometric



Fig. 19. Misis Höyük. Crater (?) 1609_1

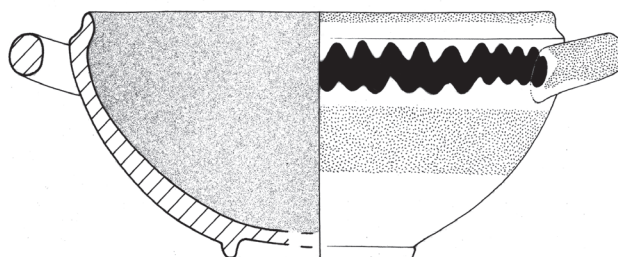


Fig. 20. Misis Höyük. Shallow bowl 1796_23.

style. The shallow bowl decorated with a wavy line in Fig. 20 (1796_23) seems a rather faithful reproduction of a Middle Geometric II/Late Geometric I protokotyle (cf. for example Verdan, Kenzelmann Pfyffer, Léderrey 2008, 89, no. 121, pl. 131). In this case, too, however, the vessel combines elements derived from the Greek tradition, such as the shape, and in particular the short offset rim and the painted interior, with a Cypriot characteristic, *i.e.* the overall decoration in bichrome technique. The main motif, as well as the treatment of surface and the use of matt paint, are a trademark of local workshops. Within a specific ceramic tradition, conventions are much more rigorously observed for the clay fabric, vessel form and surface finish, whereas, as in the examples mentioned from Misis, decorative systems and dimensions are the two features in which individual expression is most easily recorded, creating typological variability.

Here I do not wish simply to illustrate the transcultural nature of the repertoire of the Iron Age pottery from Misis, but rather to stress the way in which entanglements may have played an active role within daily practices and, ultimately, worldviews (Stockhammer 2013). The repertoire from Misis – the exact extent to which it may find parallels in that of other sites of Cilicia is unknown – can be considered the outcome of a creative phenomenon that put Cypriot visitors into contact with local individuals, and gave rise to the formation of a new context in a new geographical space (cf. for example, Dietler 1998). Applied to the Cilicia of the early first millennium BC, the model of the middle ground may be useful to paint a picture of a world of interaction, and a metaphorical place of creativity (White 1991; Malkin 2002), which gave rise to a phenomenon of transculturalism (Hitchcock, Maeir 2013). This phenomenon can be closely linked to the formation of secondary states and the need to shape new cultural identities even in places where, as in the plain of Cilicia, there were apparently no colonial settlements (Liverani 1988, 876). Accordingly, we must assume that the only Greek and Cypriot presence in the area consisted of people involved in networks of mobility.⁴

In the eastern Mediterranean, the collapse of the Late Bronze Age system allowed for the proliferation of what is known as the Levantine political system, consisting not of large territorial states but of political entities of limited size, specializing mainly in trade and the production of goods for which there was market demand, such as metals, timber and incense. Generally speaking this was a world in which decentralization and significant individual mobility went hand in hand with political instability, flourishing trade and new consumption needs. In such an environment, perhaps more than in other periods, pottery was used throughout the Mediterranean as a medium for constructing new social worlds (Crieelard 1999). It is tempting to suggest that at the start of the first millennium BC, enterprising individuals from the most dynamic cities of the island of Cyprus – such as Salamis and, perhaps, Amathous – identified in some sites of the fertile plain of Cilicia patrons capable of supporting their need for economic and political expansion, giving rise to a phenomenon that must essentially have differed little from that taking place in a colonial environment. The result was the creation of a new cultural context which shaped the new cultural identity of the Cilician elites of the Iron Age. It also found expression through a rather heterogeneous body of ceramics in which imitation, import, tradition and innovation could coexist. In other words, the creation of a transcultural material culture turns out to be one of the most successful strategies for local powers to balance external political pressures and the interests of different internal groups. The excavation of the höyük of Misis may in future years become a model for a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Assuming that under Sargon II in around 715 the plain of Cilicia was in Assyrian hands (Hawkins 2000, 38–45), the foundation of the monumental fortress at Misis in the second half of eighth century BC may be evidence of diplomatic tensions between the state of Que and the Assyrian empire (Elayi 2017). This is the time at which the plain of Cilicia is unified under the dynasty of Muksas/Mopsos, whose last member, the Urikki mentioned in the inscriptions of Karatepe, attempted to develop an independent policy from the Assyrians. However, with little success. The plain of Cilicia was annexed by the very end of the eighth century BC. Around the same years the citadel of Misis had been abandoned. The region was ready for new processes of entanglement, multiculturalism and foreign cultural hegemony.

⁴ In Malkin's middle ground paradigm indigenous groups in colonial contexts of the western Mediterranean adopted Greek cultural products, together with Greek practices including those of hospitable commensality.

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