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RIVER VALLEY IN
PREHISTORY**

Gerda Henkel Stiftung

In The Steps of James Harvey Gaul
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Tradition and Innovation in the Bronze Age Pottery of the Thessaloniki Toumba. Food and drink consumption and „tableware" ceramics¹

Stelios Andreou, Kyriaki Psaraki

The paper discusses the tableware ceramics from the Middle and Late Bronze Age levels of the prehistoric settlement mound of Thessaloniki Toumba. We analyse the qualitative and quantitative changes in the morphological and technological features of the various wares and we examine their relationship to the various social practices during which the ceramic vessels were possibly used. Furthermore, we examine the variability in the patterns of production and consumption of the pottery in relation to the habitation patterns and the material culture of the site. The aim is to investigate the social meaning and social impact of the ceramic changes during the different phases of the Middle and Late Bronze Age.

The main characteristics of the shapes, sizes, surface treatments and decoration of the pottery are presented for each period and an attempt is made to relate particular vessels and wares to particular aspects and social occasions of consumption. The primary features that characterize the tableware are the co-existence of traditional and innovative morphological and technological characteristics and the increasing differentiation of the ceramic assemblage implemented mainly through the introduction of different handmade varieties of decorated vessels, such as the incised and matt painted wares and through the partial adoption of wheel made decorated pottery, which followed the Mycenaean style. We propose that these changes were mainly related to the transformation of the etiquette of feasting. Furthermore, we suggest that the festive occasions related to food and drink consumption were important for the reproduction and change of the social order in the community and we try to demonstrate how the various tableware vessels and their features and meanings were actively employed in the course of specific social processes developing in the community.

Pottery assemblages are used widely in archaeology for the purpose of dating archaeological phenomena and for the study of cultural interactions between regions. The technology and style of ceramic assemblages are also studied to infer the economic organization of pot-

tery production and circulation and to investigate the implications of the economic processes for the understanding of past social structures. More recently however, the importance of the symbolic aspect of the material culture of the past has been emphasized and its contri-

The pottery was drawn by E. Exarhou and digitized by K. Efkleidou. The photographs are by Dr. A. Vargas, who is also responsible for the excavation data base.

I. Mavroidi contributed to the processing and the cataloguing of the pottery.

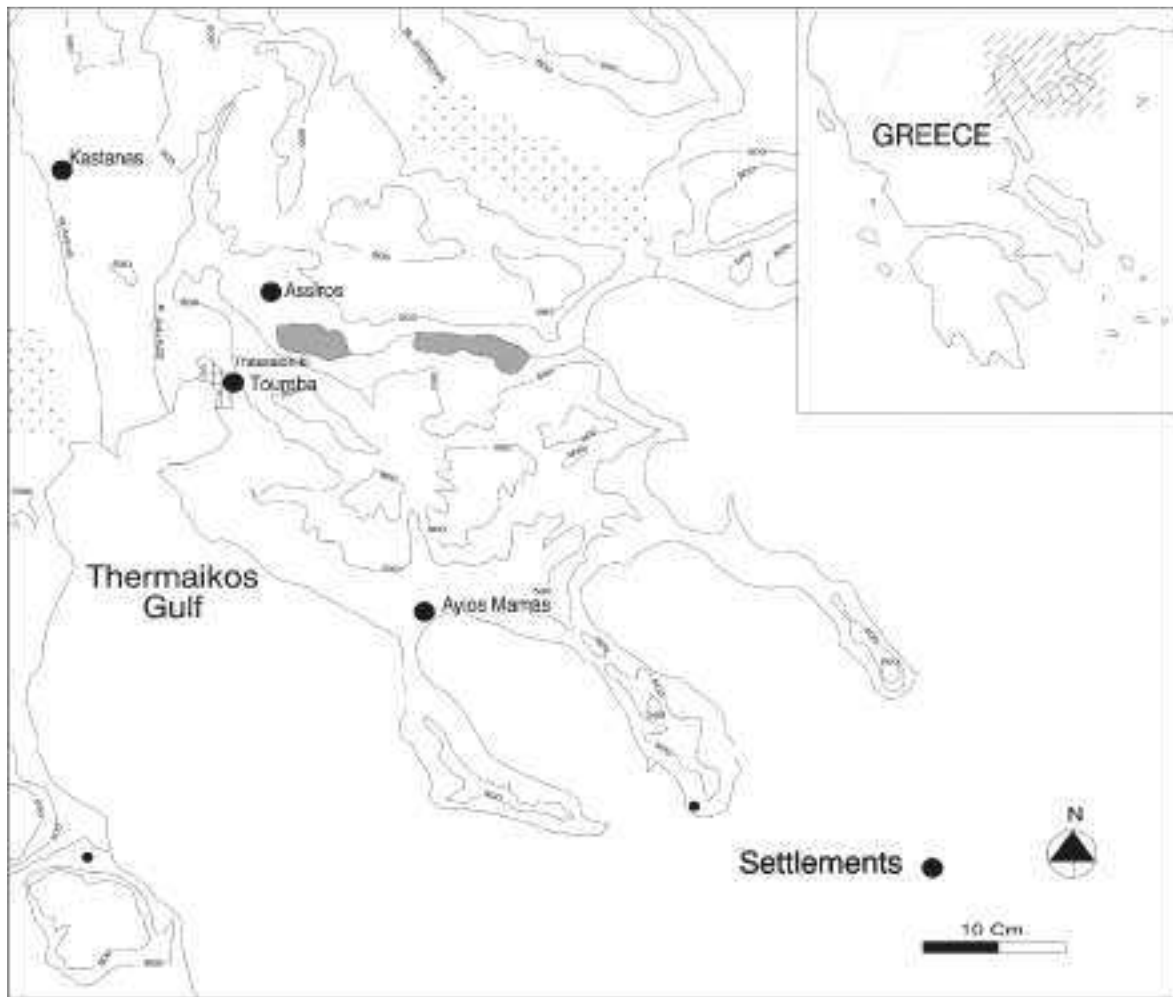


Fig. 1. Map of central Macedonia, Greece, with sites mentioned in the text.

bution to the creation of identities (collective, individual, class, ethnic, gender etc) (MESKELL 2001, 88-94; MILLER 1995). Following from this view, it can be argued that the cultural traditions related to the technological and the morphological characteristics of the pottery and the occasions or the manner of employment of the various types of vessels, must have contributed, along with other aspects of the material culture, to the process of classification of groups and individuals in past societies (STARK 1998). In this respect, the domains of production, acquisition and consumption of pottery can be understood as areas, where smaller or larger groups or particular individuals could develop their strategies, configure their social standing and reproduce or transform their social relations and identities (*cf.* HODDER 1991, 73-79, 130-37).

The study of the ceramic repertoire of past communities can offer some insights regarding

the processes described above. We will examine here the „tableware” pottery that was used at the site of Thessaloniki Toumba during the different phases of the Bronze Age in order to investigate some of the social aspects of the changes in the production, consumption and demand for certain types of vessels. We will discuss the interplay between traditional and innovative ceramic features and will consider the possible connection and impact of the ceramic material with and on social processes. Changes in the pottery could have been occasionally triggered by contacts and influences from areas and cultures located abroad, but what interests us more here is not the investigation of the origin and force of these contacts, but the examination of the contexts, which encouraged the creation of a local demand for the adoption of innovations.

We assume, mainly on morphological



Pl. 1. Thessaloniki Toumba. Aerial view.

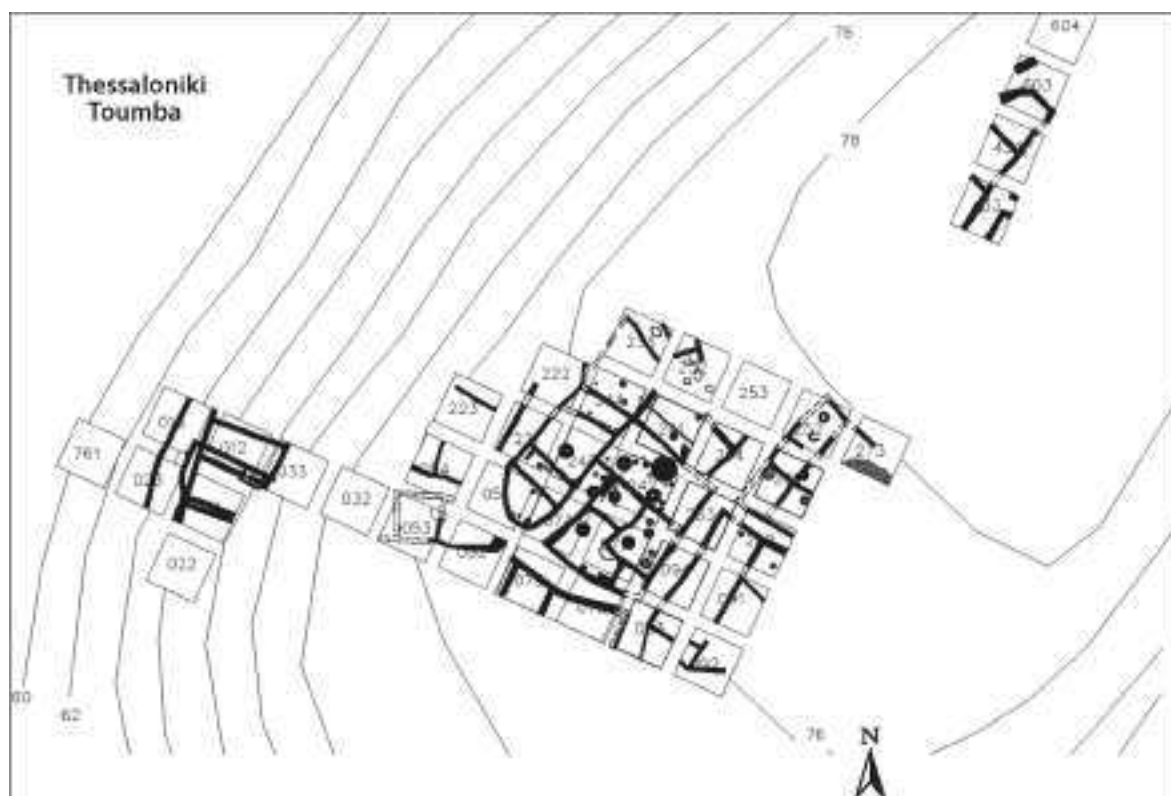


Fig. 2. Thessaloniki Toumba, plan of Late Bronze Age Phases.

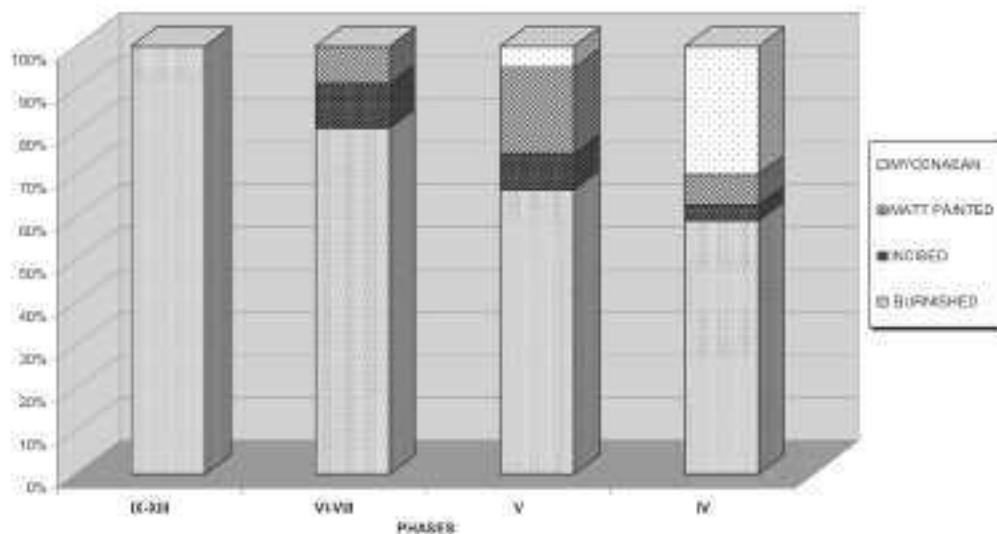


Fig. 3. Frequency of "tableware" categories in Thessaloniki Toumba. Bronze Age

grounds, that the pottery, which is discussed here and is conventionally classed as "tableware", was primarily used in acts of eating and drinking and as such it seems particularly appropriate for the investigation of issues like those described above². It has been frequently pointed out, that the social practices of food and drink preparation and consumption are important cultural domains that are closely related to the construction and expression of identities related to class, ethnicity or other (SHERRATT 1991; HAMILAKIS 1998; STEEL 2004). Particularly charged symbolically and thus especially significant and expressive for the construction of identities, the structuring of social roles and the underlining of social distinctions or similarities are occasions of collective ceremonial consumption of food and drink. Indeed, archaeologists have recognized in recent years the importance of feasting as arenas for the construction and negotiation of social relations and positions in past societies, and for the development of expressive actions and strategies towards the attainment of a variety of social aims. It has been pointed out that feasts may function as mechanisms, which

strengthen unity and common identity and at the same time or in different occasions they can also promote differentiations and the hierarchization of societies. In addition to food, several researchers emphasized the particular contribution of alcoholic beverages in feasts. They seem to strengthen further the dramatic aspect of consumption through their psychoactive qualities and facilitate the transmission of the appropriate messages and meanings (DIETLER 1996; DIETLER 2001; DIETLER/HAYDEN 2001; HAYDEN 2001; WRIGHT 2004; ANDREOU 2003).

The material culture (foodstuffs, facilities, equipment), which is implicated with the dietary practices is especially relevant and important for the development and the understanding of these processes. Equally important are the location, the circumstances of the act, the terms of participation, the bodily movements or other things and behaviors related to the social occasions of food and drink preparation and consumption (DIETLER 2001). Several recent studies have shown that modifications in the quantity, the morphological and technological variability and embellishment of vessels used in eating and

¹ The expression "tableware" is used here in a broad sense and includes the burnished, handmade, undecorated and decorated open and closed shapes, which on the basis of size, shape and fabric, could have been used for the short term storage, serving and consumption of food and drink. It also includes all the wheel-made pottery of the site, with very few exceptions. It is probable that other uses, such as the storage and transfer of substances

for cleaning and tending the body, should also be included here. We are fully aware of the intricate problems involved in the identification of the use of ceramic vessels and organic residue analysis on samples from Thessaloniki Toumba is presently underway (ROUMBOU et al. 2003). As in all settlements, storage and cooking wares are also abundant at the site, but are not discussed here.

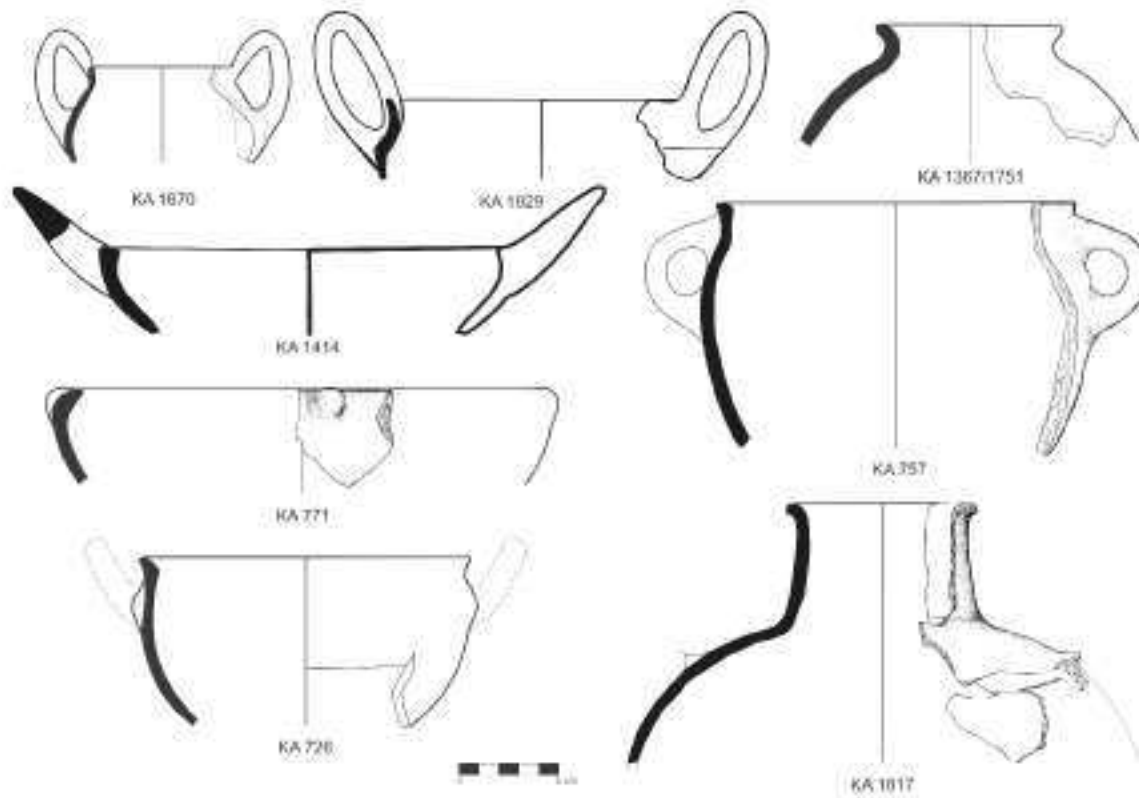


Fig. 4. The main open and closed "tableware" shapes. Phases XIV–IX (Middle Bronze Age).

drinking can be related to modifications in the etiquette and have implications for the social meaning of feasting. Such vessels can comprise lavishly decorated or technologically elaborate serving sets and occasionally may be imported or inspired by foreign prototypes (WRIGHT 2004, 17–28). The rise of use of such „tableware“ can be associated with adjustments in the frequency, the complexity, the accessibility and the classification of feasting occasions and may imply modifications in the social meaning of food and drink consumption and consequently changes in the impact of these acts on social relations in past communities (DIETLER 1990; JUNKER 2001; WRIGHT 2004; BORGNA 2004; STEEL 2004).

Before we examine the „tableware“ from the Thessaloniki Toumba, some information is required on the particular context of the consumptive activities at the site and the region during the Bronze Age.

The settlement of Thessaloniki Toumba

The tell settlement (toumba) of Thessaloniki is located at the eastern hilly outskirts of the city, ca. three kilometers from the Northeastern

coast of the Thermaikos gulf. The 20 m. high mound overlooks the narrow coastal plain and stands out as a prominent feature in the now overbuilt landscape (Fig. 1 and Pl. 1). During the Bronze Age, with the exception of parts of peninsular Chalkidiki, several similar steep sided mounds were the regular type of settlement in the region of Northern Greece, which extends roughly between the Axios and Strymon rivers. The Thessaloniki Toumba with a maximum size of a little over 1 ha. is among the larger and higher mounds in the area (ANDREOU et al. 1996; WARDLE 1997).

The excavation of the site revealed several architectural phases, which span the time between ca. 2000 BC and the later 4th century BC. The phases which date to the Bronze Age and to which the pottery under discussion belongs, fall into three broad periods: the Middle Bronze Age (phases XIV–IX, ca 2050–1650 BC), the earlier Late Bronze Age (phases VIII–VI, ca 1650–1350 BC) and the later Late Bronze Age (phases V–III) (ANDREOU/KOTSAKIS 1997). Regarding the Middle and the earlier Late Bronze Age phases, the material culture of Toumba compares to some

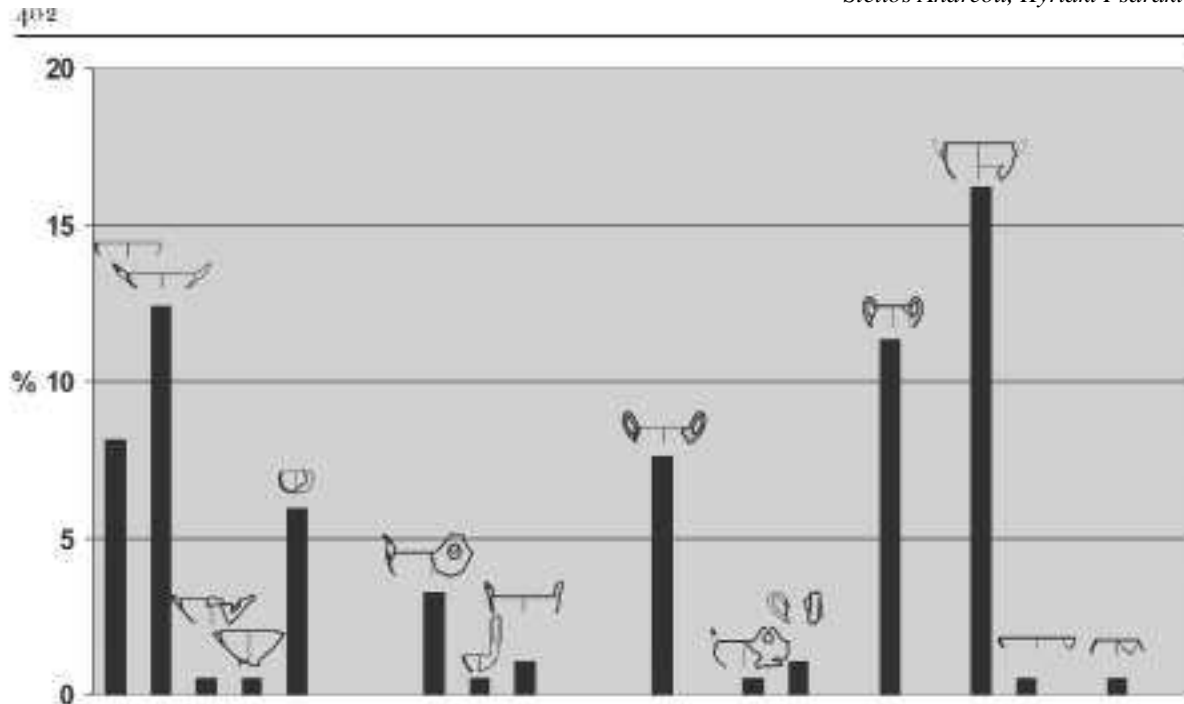


Fig. 5. Frequency of open "tableware" shapes during phases XIV–IX (Middle Bronze Age).

extent with that of the mounds of Arhontiko on the western edge of the plain of Thessaloniki and Ayios Mamas in Chalkidiki, and the Middle and early Late Bronze Age horizon at Argissa and Pefkakia Magoula in Thessaly (ANDREOU et al. 2001; PILALI-PAPASTERIOU/PAPAEFTHYMIU-PAPANTHIMOU 2002; HÄNSEL 2002; ASLANIS/HÄNSEL 1999). Phase V should be dated mainly to the 13th century BC on the presence of some Late Helladic IIIA2 and mainly IIIB, but not LHI-IIIC style sherds, while phases IV and III contain some pottery of the Late Helladic IIIC styles and should cover the 12th and early 11th centuries BC. The following phase II contains some early Protogeometric pots, which point to the 11th and early 10th centuries BC (ANDREOU 2003)³.

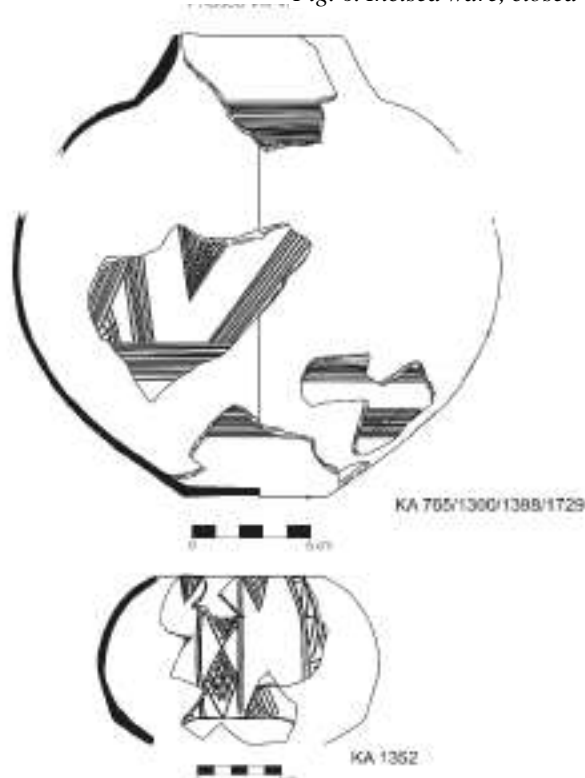
Not much is known about the layout and the organization of the settlement during the Middle and the earlier Later Bronze Age, since only a small area belonging to these periods has been excavated. A mud-brick wall at the base of the mound bounded the edge of the settlement from the start and during the Middle Bronze Age habitation seems to have been widely spread and thinly spaced on the different levels

of the low natural rise which formed the original ground of the settlement (ANDREOU/KOTSAKIS 1997). By the later part of the Late Bronze Age (phase IV), buildings had been drawn to the highest terraces of the mound. A wide, 3 m. high, casemated, mud-brick enclosure had been built midway down the slope, turning the site into an imposing landmark in the landscape (Fig. 2). During the same period, large mud-brick compounds with many roughly rectangular rooms and inner courts crowded the successive terraces near and at the top of the mound. One of these compounds has been excavated to an extent of ca. 200 sq.m. A number of others have been only partially investigated, but there are reasons to suspect that buildings at the site did not vary substantially in size, plan and elaboration, implying the absence of marked differences in terms of intrasettlement organization. The compounds contained extensive indications of crop-storage, mainly in large storage jars (pithoi) and extensive facilities for the preparation and consumption of large quantities of food and probably wine. Food preparation and wine making are indicated by the presence of

³ The dates offered here are very rough and depend mainly on calculations based on the conventional dates given to the stylistic phases of the Mycenaean pottery and the number of sub-phases in each phase. Carbonized samples from Toum-

ba are under analysis at the Radiocarbon Laboratory of the NCSR "Demokritos" in Athens. For the problems of absolute dating at the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age, see WARDLE, in this volume.

Fig. 6. Incised ware, closed vessels Late Bronze Age



through various means and cultural practices the communal aspects of life were emphasized. Nevertheless, some differences in status were probably stressed through access to rare and valuable imports from the Southern Aegean and the Danube. It has also been suggested, that relationships of inequality or dependency may have developed on the regional level between the small communities, which inhabited the mounds and were located at close distance from each other (WARDLE 1989; ANDREOU/KOTSAKIS 1994). It is likely then, that during the later Late Bronze Age, clusters of mounds formed small scale, transient and unstable, hierarchical regional networks, which were dominated by certain communities, which, like Thessaloniki Toumba, display at certain periods a more complex organization and an ability to mobilize large amounts of foodstuffs (HALSTEAD 1994, 203-6; JONES et al., 1986; ANDREOU/KOTSAKIS 1999; ANDREOU et al., 1996, 585) These, could have been partly used in occasions of feasting taking place inside the large compounds (ANDREOU 2001; ANDREOU 2003).

some large hearths, several bulky cooking vessels, archaeobotanical remains, including numerous grape pips and skins, animal bones, fish bones and shells (ANDREOU/KOTSAKIS 1997); MANGAFA et al. 1998; MANGAFA/KOTSAKIS 1996). In addition, remains of domestic activities were dispersed in most spaces. The size and character of the groups inhabiting the compounds of the Thessaloniki Toumba can not be determined accurately at this point. It seems likely however, that the buildings could have housed large residential groups in the form of extended or complex households (ANDREOU 2001).

It has been suggested that communities in the area, during the Late Bronze Age, would range in population size between few dozen and few hundreds of people (WARDLE 1997). Thessaloniki Toumba should be in the highest range. Nevertheless, it has not been possible so far to make out marked differences in status, power or wealth between households on the community level during the later Late Bronze Age, either at Thessaloniki or in other contemporary sites. Instead, there are indications that



Pl. 2. Dark-phased, burnished bowl.
Phases XIV-IX (Middle Bronze Age).



Pl. 3. Incised jug. Later Late Bronze Age.



Pl. 4. Incised and encrusted two-handled globular
jar. Later Late Bronze Age.



Pl. 5. Matt-painted bowl. Later Late Bronze Age.



Pl. 6. Matt-painted jar. Later Late Bronze Age.

The changing patterns of the Thessaloniki Toumba „tableware“ vessels

In the following section we shall examine the quantitative and qualitative changes and interrelations between and inside the classes of „tableware“ pottery at the site during the 2nd millennium. The emphasis will be on surface treatment, including decoration, and shape and to a lesser extent on technology. The aim is to track the modifications in the etiquette and complexity of ceremonial food and/or drink consumption as they are implied by the development or not of some kind of special feasting gear. The use and display of the latter, as it

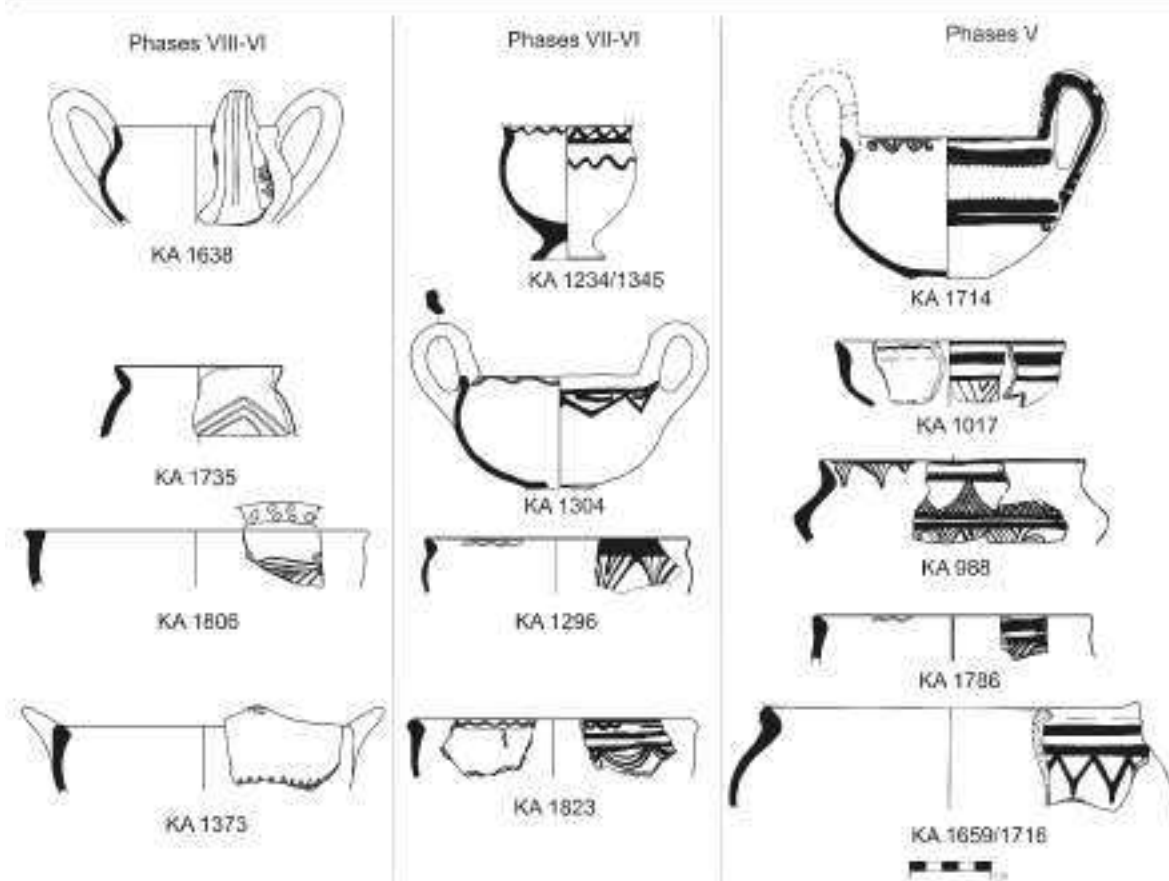


Fig. 7. Incised and matt-painted ware. Open shapes. Earlier and later Late Bronze Age.

was pointed out earlier, may have facilitated, through use and display, the expression of particular meanings during the occasions of feasting. In this sense, they may have contributed to the creation, reproduction or transformation of social identities and relations inside the communities of Bronze Age communities in coastal Macedonia.

Four large classes of „tableware“ pottery in terms of surface treatment and technological characteristics are predominant at the site. One is undecorated and burnished and three are decorated: the incised, the matt-painted and the wheel-made pottery. The latter is almost all decorated in the Mycenaean style. Each of these classes follows a particular trajectory in terms of frequency, technology, shapes and surface treatment in the 2nd millennium deposits of Thessaloniki Toumba (Fig. 3). These probably interrelated trajectories will be examined in the context of other changes in the history of the site as evidence for the transformation of the social meaning and the social impact of food and

drink consumption in the community of Thessaloniki Toumba.

The Middle Bronze Age (Phases XIV-IX)

The amount of „tableware“ pottery, which belongs to this period, is limited due to the small size of the excavated area. All the pottery is undecorated and burnished and as a rule the vessels are made of medium pastes, display well burnished surfaces and are fired irregularly to shades of dark brown and gray with only few light-faced examples (Pl. 2).

Despite the fact that all the pottery belongs to one technological tradition, it is far from being technologically standardized and displays high internal variability in paste details, surface treatment and firing. The „tableware“ indicates a non systematic production, in terms of materials and production procedures and probably also in terms of supply (PSARAKI 2004, 250-51).

The open vessels display a wide variability in forms and sizes as opposed to the closed shapes,

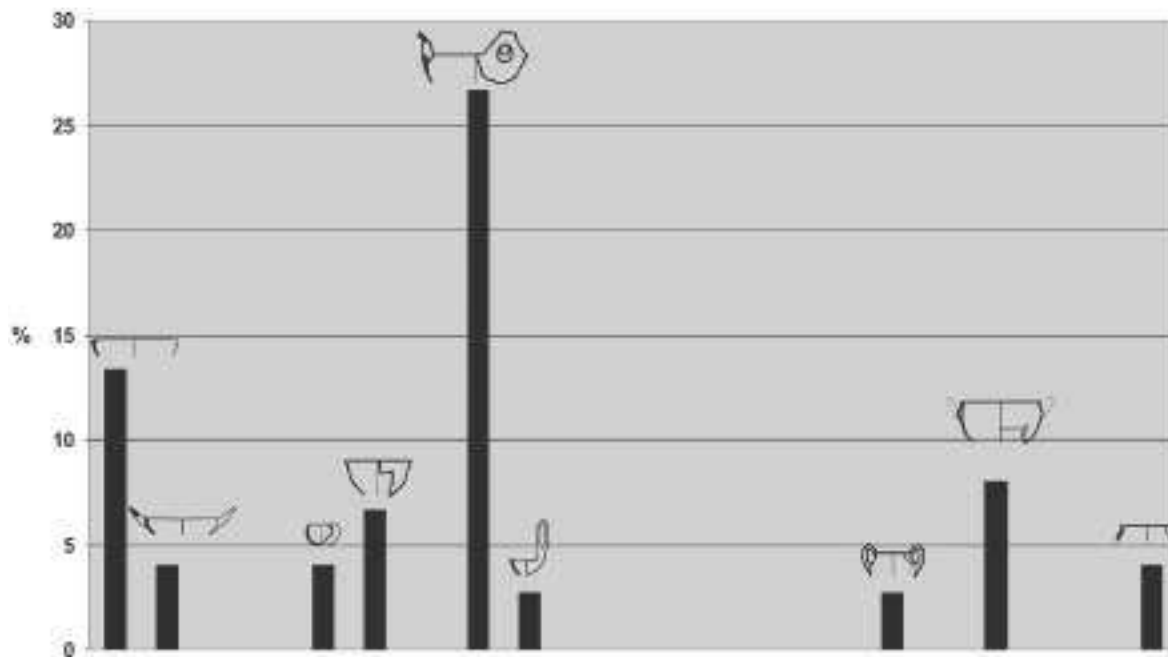


Fig. 8. Frequency of open, undecorated burnished "tableware". Phases VIII—VI (early Late Bronze Age).

which are limited to few medium sized jars with cylindrical necks and even fewer wide mouthed jars, small jars and jugs (Fig. 4: KA1617, 757, 1367/1751) (PSARAKI 2004, 251-53). Five bowl forms however seem to predominate (Fig. 5; Pl. 2). The S-profile bowl with vertical, high-rising handles is always small-sized and may be more securely associated with drinking, as should also be the case with the carinated bowl with vertical high-rising handles (Fig. 4: KA1670; 1929). On the other hand the bowl with incurving rim would have been inappropriate for drinking, while the rest of the more popular forms seem less specialized in terms of use (Fig. 4: KA771, 1414, 726) (PSARAKI 2004, 149, 177, 252-53).

What is perhaps more significant is the lack of interest for any kind of elaboration in terms of technology, shape and surface treatment. This implies the absence of vessels for display during occasions of food and drink consumption. The only possible indication to the contrary might be a small number of carinated and small S-profile bowls, a jug and few necked jars. These vessels stand out for their metallic look, which is created by the even and high burnishing and the homogeneous, dark gray color of their surface (PSARAKI 2004, 254).

The almost total absence of special vessels appropriate for display during occasions of

food and drink consumption does not necessarily mean the absence of ceremonial occasions of food and drink consumption during the Middle Bronze Age at Thessaloniki Toumba. It is possible that during this period the symbolic emphasis may have been less on the serving gear and the associated material culture and more on other aspects of the feasting events, such as the food, the conditions or the location of consumption. There is no information on the latter, but the considerable presence of red and fallow deer in the Middle Bronze Age deposits of the site may in fact be related to events of collective ritual consumption. The preliminary study of the animal bones has also shown the absence of large wild mammals from the Late Bronze Age levels of the Thessaloniki Toumba. Hare however, was hunted throughout the Bronze Age (KONSTANTINIDOU 2001, 86-89; IOANNIDOU, *n. d.*) The distribution and consumption of meat from large hunted animals in prehistoric sedentary communities has often been tied to feasting events, which contributed to group integration and at the same time conferred prestige and provided hunters with an opportunity to enhance their influence in the community and construct a special identity for themselves (DEAN 2001; POTTER 2000; STEEL 2004, 167-72).

Consequently, the evidence may indicate the

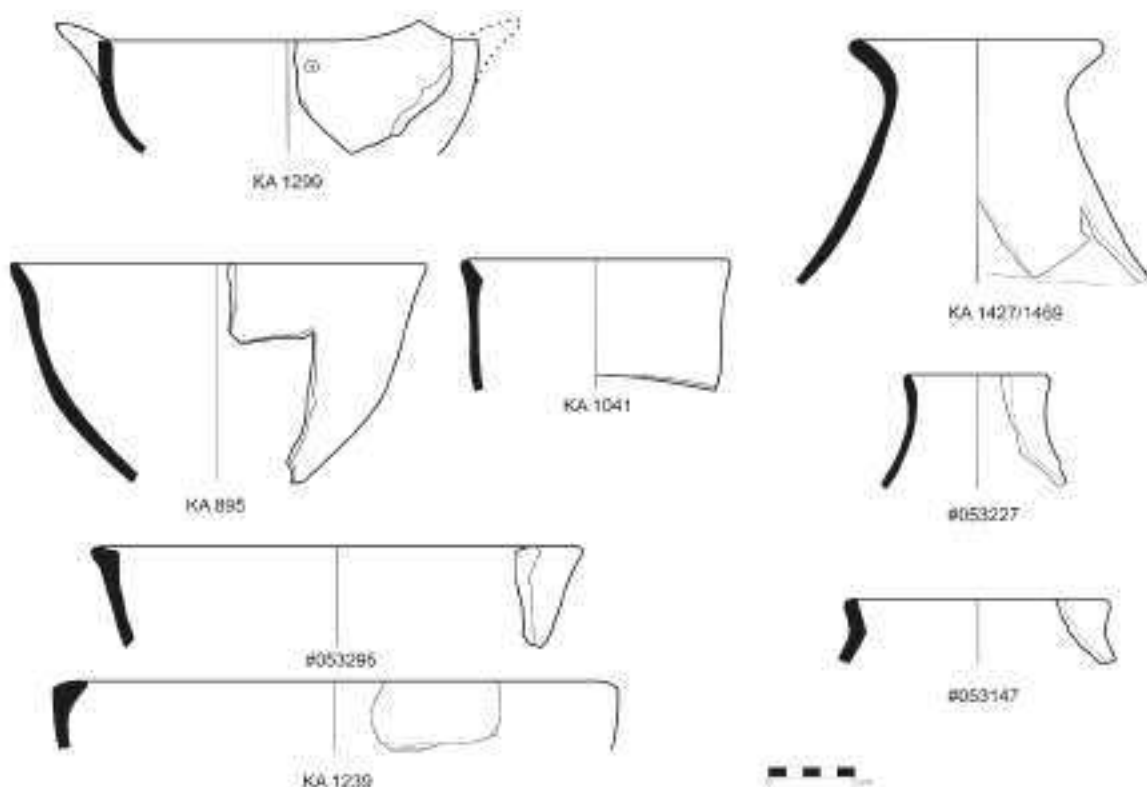


Fig. 9. The main open and closed "tableware" shapes. Phases VIII—VI (earlier Late Bronze Age).

rise of a particular kind of feasting at Thessaloniki Toumba during this period, which was not accompanied by the development of some specialized form of material culture to emphasize the ritual aspect of the event, but nevertheless, expressed through other means the integrative power of collective consumption. As Dietler has pointed out however, this type of events can at the same time be occasions for competitive showing offs and for the development of unequal relations of status and power between providers and receivers of a more or less temporary nature (DIETLER 2001, 76-82).

The earlier Late Bronze Age (Phases VIII-VI)

The existing evidence indicates that this was a period of life reorganization and material culture elaboration in the community of Thessaloniki Toumba. Security and the prominent position of the community in the regional landscape were stressed through the concentration of habitation on the highest terraces of the mound and the construction of the earliest phase of the casemated wall at the lower part of the existing slope, above the Middle Bronze Age

house floors (Fig. 2). The restricted size of the earlier Late Bronze excavated area allows only a limited understanding of the earlier settlement. It appears however, that the plan of two of the later compounds had been already laid out with their house walls much more meticulously built and plastered than in the later period (ANDREOU/KOTSAKIS 1997). Although the detailed meanings of the intra-site spatial changes are far from clear, they seem to imply a restructuring of relations on the community and the local level, a more intricate political landscape than before, and the creation of new social relations, positions and identities. In this respect the occurrence during this period of a small number of clay stamp-seals, decorated with occasionally complex linear motives and with string holes to facilitate their suspension may be indicative of an intensified need for material means of individual identification.

It is perhaps in this political and social context that the elaboration of consuming habits at the site, through the use of two decorated "tableware" classes, can be better understood. During the period appeared the earliest incised vessels, in phase VII, and then the earliest mattpainted,

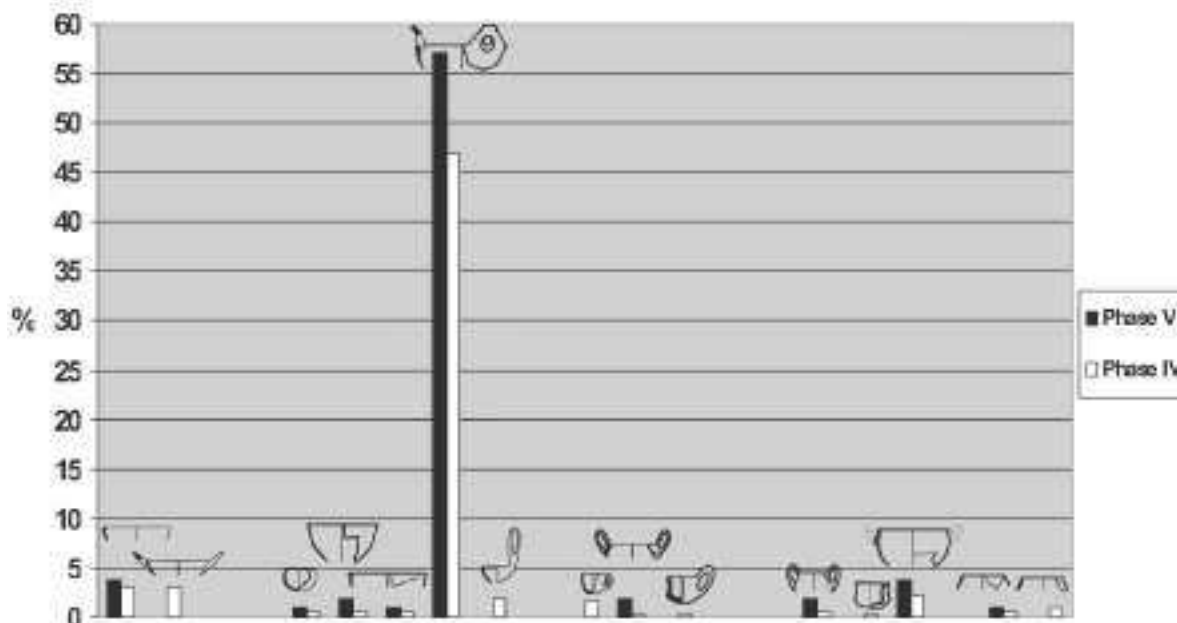


Fig. 10. Frequency of open undecorated burnished "tableware" during phases V-IV (early Late Bronze Age).

in phase VII/VI (Fig. 6 and 7) (PSARAKI 2004, 231, 235). The significance of the innovation is emphasized by the fact that this was the first time after the end of the 5th millennium BC that decorated pottery was used in the area.

Both classes of „tableware" vessels occur in very limited numbers. Both display a medium fine paste, well burnished and homogeneously fired surfaces, black, gray, brown and red for the incised and light brown to light red for the mattpainted (PSARAKI 2004, 138-40, 234-35).

The incised ware was decorated during this period with carefully executed, mostly rectilinear motives. Several techniques were used and the motives were filled with white paste, but not encrusted (Fig. 6). Open shapes are too few and fragmentary to permit clues about their use. The closed incised vessels however, belong overwhelmingly to small and medium sized globular, narrow mouthed jars with two rim-to-shoulder handles. The repeated association between the shape and the incised ware indicates a specialized use and meaning related to the storage, transfer and consumption of small amounts of liquids of unknown kind (PSARAKI 2004, 198-201, 261-62). A very tentative association with local aromatic substances has been suggested however (ANDREOU 2003). Much more plausible however, is the association of this type of vessel with the Balkan regions to the North,

from where it must have been adopted during this period (*cf.* HOCHSTETTER 1982; SHALGANOVA 1995). It is not possible to say however, if its use was adopted along with the type. After all, there is no conclusive evidence regarding its function there, apart from the fact that it occasionally occurs in tombs and it probably belongs to a special and prestigious class of service vessels.

The amount of mattpainted was still very limited during this phase. It comprises mainly small S-profile bowls with raised vertical handles and closed jars, decorated with a manganese base paint and a variety of rectilinear and some curvilinear motives (Fig. 7) (PSARAKI 2004, 235). Both shapes were well represented in the undecorated „tableware" of the previous period at Thessaloniki Toumba and on morphological grounds they can be more likely associated with the consumption of liquids. The fact that these types of richly decorated bowls occur during this period primarily in their decorated version implies an association of these vessels and the consumptive events during which they were used with a new and particular symbolism (PSARAKI 2004, 263). Since the bowls can be plausibly related to drinking, their presence may also imply the rise of a new drinking etiquette performed at some special festive occasions during which a particular liquid was consumed, alone or in together with other foods.

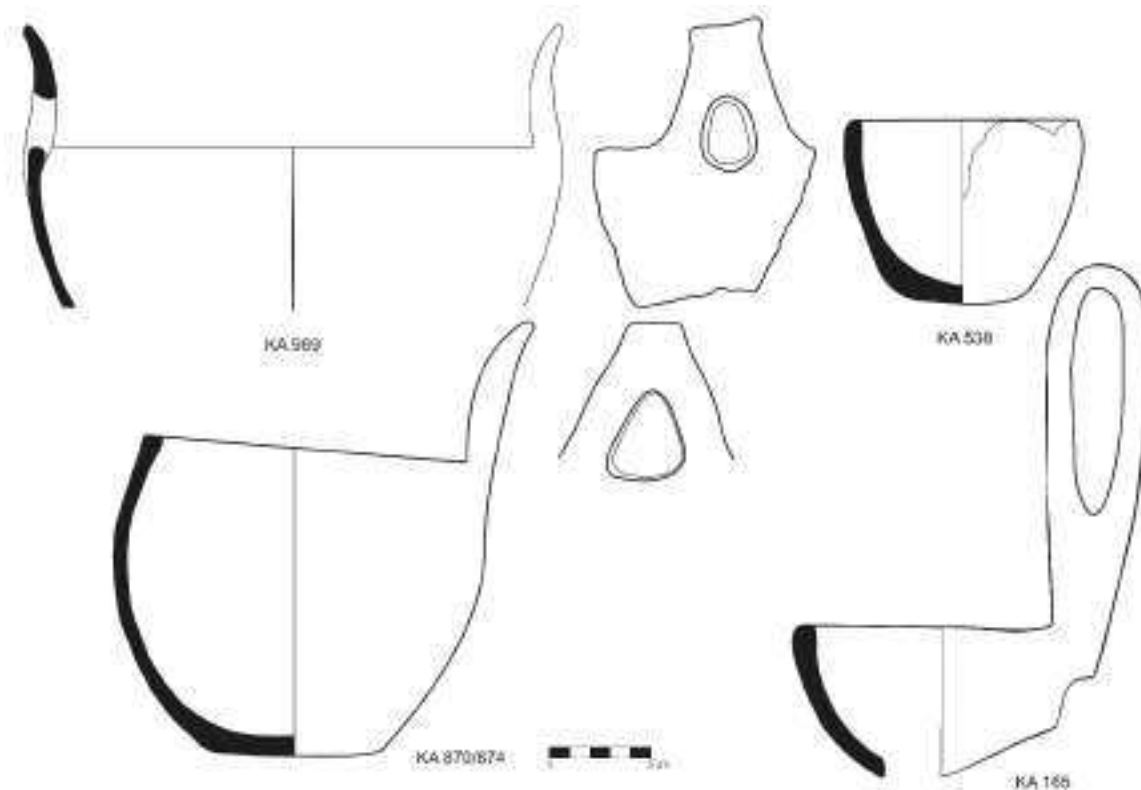


Fig. 11. The main open, undecorated burnished "tableware". Phases V-IV (later Late Bronze Age).

We would like to argue, that the innovation marked by the appearance of the decorated "tableware" was the beginning, during the earlier Late Bronze Age at Toumba, of a process of formalization of feasting, which laid particular emphasis on the material culture related to the consumption of liquids. Through this process, both the luxurious and specialized serving sets and perhaps also the particular drink consumed in them would gradually become the necessary cues for the recognition of the ceremonial character of the feasts and the expression of its associated meanings. In fact, the separation of these events from everyday food and drink consumption becomes clearer, if one looks at the development of the traditional undecorated burnished "tableware". During this period a considerable decrease in the variability of open shapes is evident. While several of the old shapes continue, the emphasis is now mainly on two types of bowls: the shallow bowl with incurving rim and the rounded deep bowl with wishbone handles (Fig. 8 and 9). Furthermore, the two types occur in a wide range of sizes, which may be an indication of a mul-

tiplicity of uses for these bowls as opposed to the more specialized decorated vessels becomes more apparent. It should be pointed out, on the other hand, that the number of closed vessels is still quite small during this period to be able to decide about the significance of the greater variety of undecorated closed shapes, which occur in the earlier Late Bronze Age levels (Fig. 9) (PSARAKI 2004, 232-33, 261).

It could be suggested then, that the new social relations, identities and roles that were structured in the social and political landscape of the earlier Late Bronze Age were also associated with innovations focusing on the elaboration of important aspects of the etiquette of feasting. The social meanings of at least some of these events were reorganized through the adoption of specialized, richly decorated vessels intended very probably for the consumption of liquids. The limited quantity of decorated vessels in the earlier late Bronze Age levels is probably related to the rarity of these new events during this initial Late Bronze Age phase. We shall follow their development and come back to the discussion of their meaning in the later part

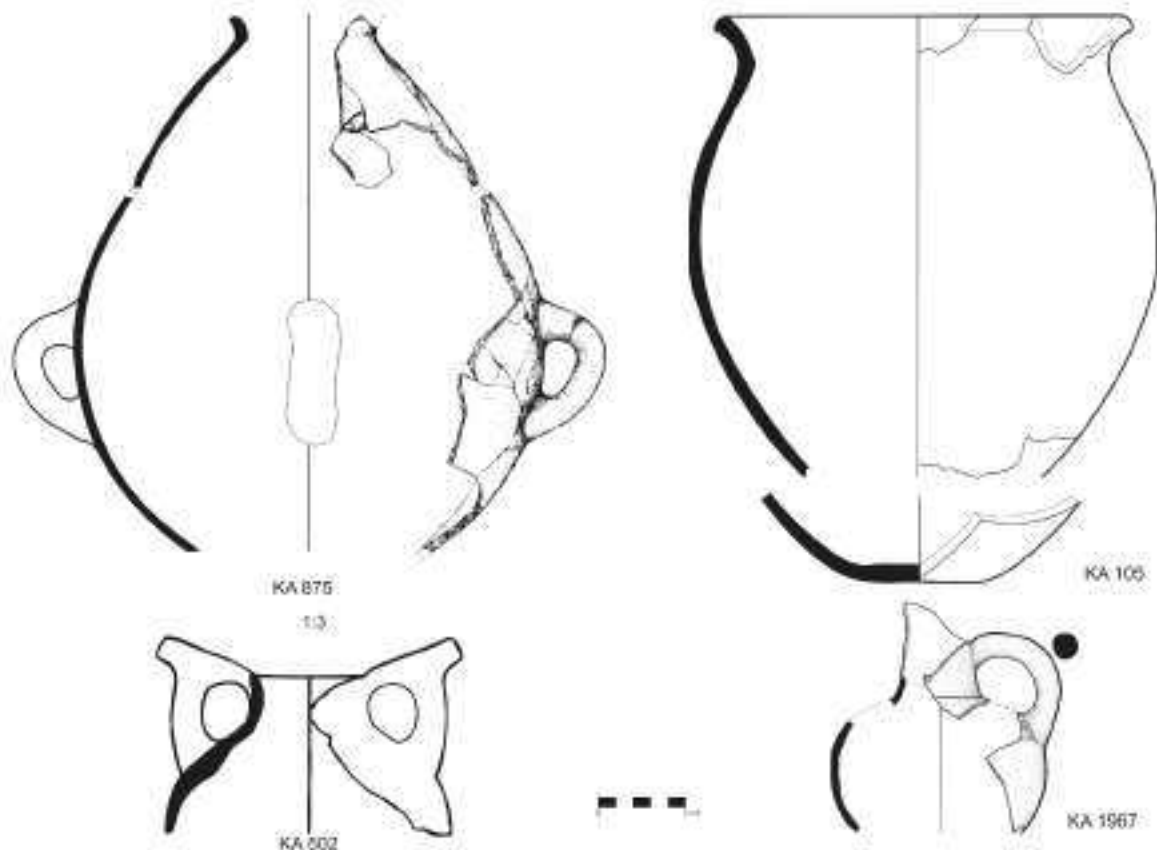


Fig. 12. The main closed, undecorated burnished "tableware". Phases V-IV (later Late Bronze Age).

of the period. Before this however, one more aspect of the earlier Late Bronze Age ceramic processes should be pointed out.

Apart from the innovations related to the beginning of the decorated wares, some new features can be observed in the technological characteristics of the pottery. While vessels produced with the materials and techniques of the previous period are still present, a number of new features occur in terms of raw materials and production techniques. The more homogeneous surfaces and the lighter and brighter colors of many vessels along with the use of the manganese based paint imply considerable improvements in firing control. While these changes may not be enough to indicate major modifications in the organization of production, the elaboration in terms of both the incised and painted decoration may imply the presence of few more skilled and talented potters.

Despite the fact that the shape repertory of the matt-painted ware was well established in the local tradition, it has been suggested, that the new style may owe its inspiration to the mat-

tpainted pottery that was used in Southern and Central Greece during the Middle Helladic and the early Mycenaean period (WARDLE 1993, 124). Stylistic similarities lend, indeed, some strength to this view, but the issue requires further study. Nevertheless, if this was the case, the adopted innovation, that is the painted decoration, should be probably understood as adding extra symbolic value to a practice, which had already developed a local significance (*cf.* WRIGHT 2004, 18-25; STEEL 2004, 168). What is perhaps a more obvious aspect of the rise of both types of decorated pottery during this period is that both signal the end to the cultural isolation which characterized the region, with the exception of Chalkidiki and the coast of Pieria, during the Middle Bronze Age (ANDREOU et al. 2001).

The later Late Bronze Age (Phases V-IV)

This period displays a complex interplay between traditional and innovative features in all aspects of „tableware" pottery. The most ob-

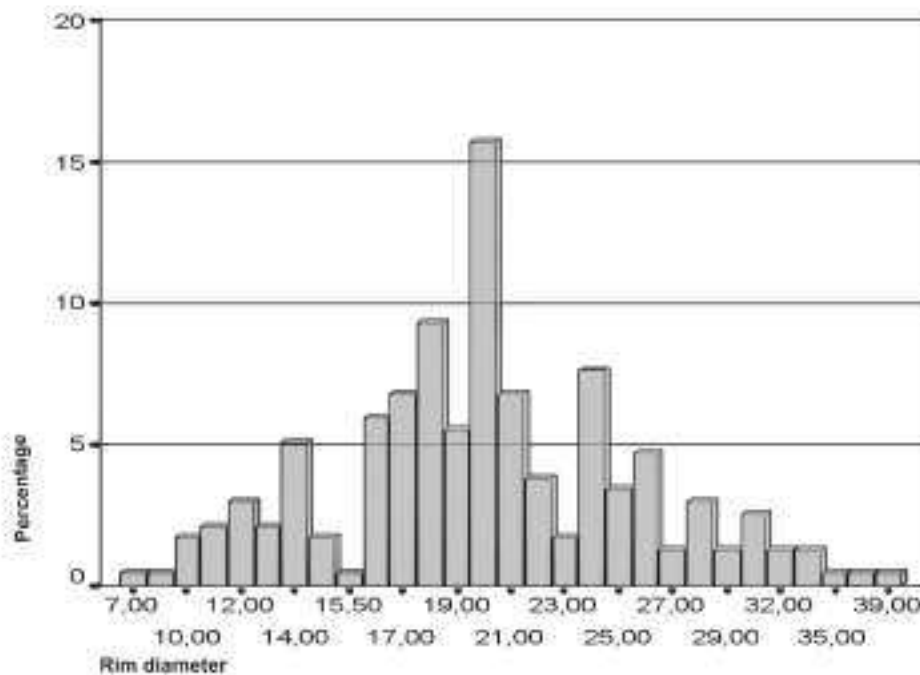


Fig. 13. Size variation among the undecorated burnished open shapes of phase IV.

vious innovative feature is related to the decorated component with the introduction of wheel made pottery in the Mycenaean style (Fig. 3). Nevertheless, neither the meaning of this innovation nor the social processes that were related to the consumption of tableware ceramics and were taking place during the period in the community of Thessaloniki Toumba can be comprehended without a combined examination of the two ceramic traditions, the handmade and the wheelmade (KIRIATZI et al., 1997; ANDREOU/KOTSAKIS 1999)⁴.

In comparison to previous periods, the handmade tableware is more standardized in terms of raw materials, forming techniques, surface treatment and firing. At the same time the pottery displays enough internal variation, which can be attributed to small scale regional production and circulation comprising a number of potters located in the Thessaloniki Toumba area or the wider zone of the eastern Thermaikos gulf. On the other hand, technological and stylistic evidence suggest a more specialized production for the matt-painted pottery, involving only few potters who used more

complicated techniques in terms of slips, paints and firing control for the manufacture of this ware (KIRIATZI 2000, 256-57).

The undecorated burnished ware continued into the tradition established during the previous period in terms of surface treatment and firing. The only new addition is a red slipped and burnished undecorated version, which seems to be a particular characteristic of the site. The decrease in the variability of the open shapes during this phase however, is much more impressive since there is an overwhelming concentration in one type, the deep rounded bowl with wishbone handles (Fig. 10). On the other hand the wide range of sizes, some variability in the rim profiles and the very small number of cups, imply a rather multifunctional role for the wishbone handle bowl (Fig. 11 and 13) (PSARAKI 2004, 236-37, 243) (*cf.* WARDLE et al. 2002). As opposed to the open, the closed shapes display a remarkable increase in variability. There is particular emphasis on vessels related to liquids, with jugs of various sizes and the undecorated globular jar with two trigger shaped handles (Fig. 12) (PSARAKI 2004, 237-38, 243-45)⁵.

⁴ The handmade and wheelmade "tableware" of this period from Thessaloniki Toumba is very similar to the pottery from the sites of Kastanas (levels 16-13) and Assiros (phases 9-5) and its features have been already described

in the relevant publications (HOCHSTETTER 1984; JUNG 2002; WARDLE 1980; WARDLE 1993).

⁵ Similar undecorated burnished ware closed vessels occur in Kamenska Cuka (STEFANOVICH/BANKOFF 1998).

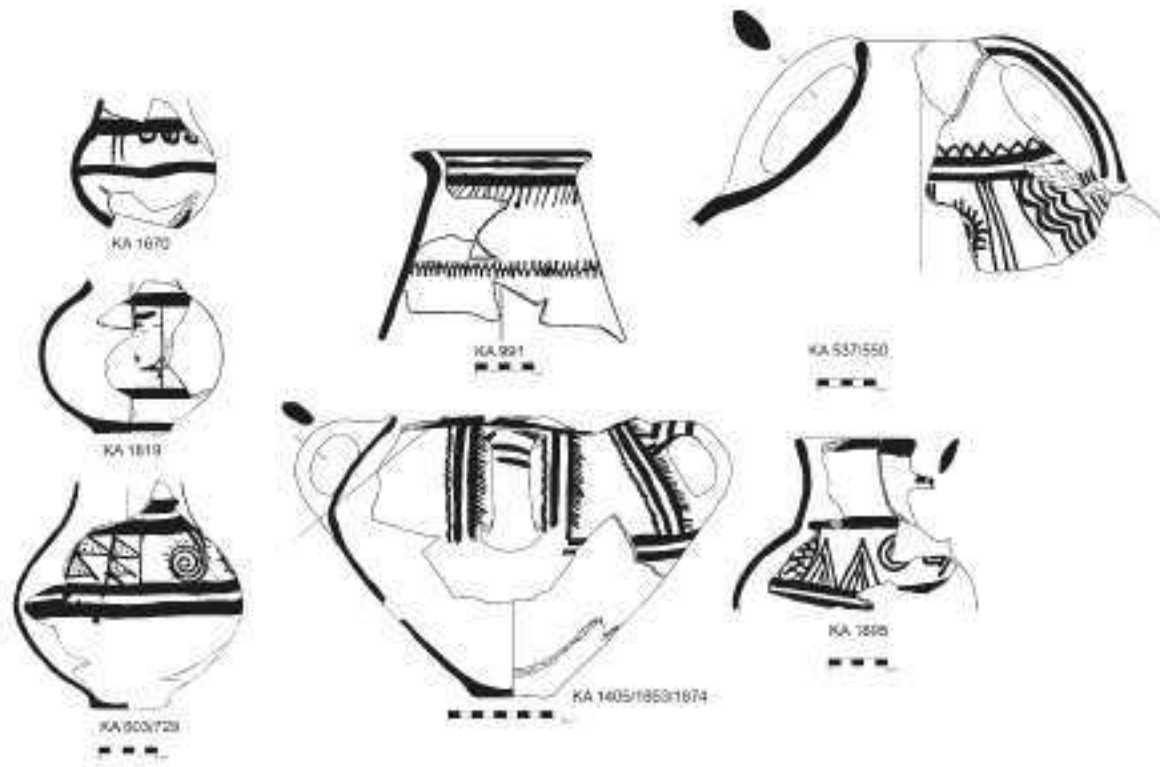


Fig. 14. Matted-painted ware. Closed shapes of the later Late Bronze Age (Phases V and IV).

The amount of incised ware decreased remarkably during the course of the period (Fig. 3). Here again, while the open shapes almost disappeared, the clear emphasis is on the closed shapes. Jugs of various sizes and few larger jars were added to the traditional globular two handled jars. The latter were decorated with the technique of encrustation with white or pink paste (Fig. 6 and Pl. 3, 4). The particular style and technique of decoration are characteristic of this type of vessel and there is a tendency during this period for decorative motives and techniques to be regularly associated with specific vessel types. The small amount of incised

pots prevents any serious discussion of their use and social function. It is worth pointing out however, that the incised ware shares with the undecorated burnished ware all the closed vessel types that are associated with the consumption of liquids (PSARAKI 2004, 240, 246).

In contrast, the matted-painted ware displays significant deviations from the undecorated and the incised of the same period in the repertory of shapes, the morphological characteristics and the pattern of pottery consumption and these deviations probably imply important differences in functions and social meanings. During phase V, which covers the beginning

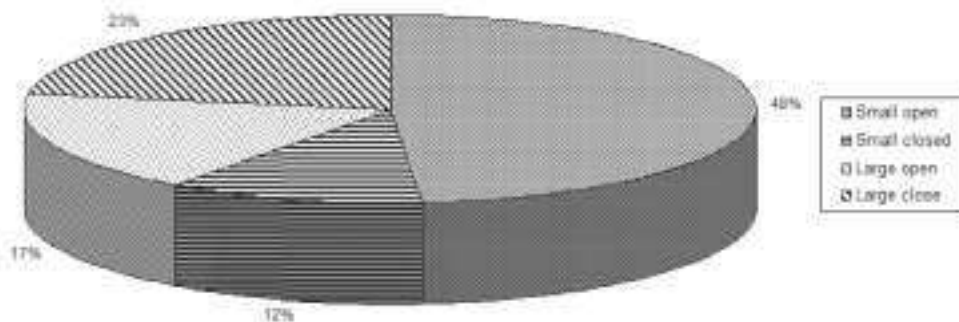


Fig. 15. Frequency of types of Mycenaean style vessels in Phase IV.

of the period, the amount of matt-painted was more than doubled and the impression that the ware comprised luxurious drinking sets is stronger than the earlier in Late Bronze Age (Fig. 3). The open vessels comprise S-profile and fewer carinated and rounded bowls with raised vertical strap handles. The closed ones are mainly medium sized neck or belly handled jars and fewer jugs (Fig. 7 and 14. Pl. 5 and 6). All shapes are specific to this ware. The bowls belong to traditional types, which during this period were only current in the painted version and the decorated jars, despite some general similarities, divert clearly in the details from their undecorated equivalents. All vessels are generously decorated. The bowls exhibit a remarkable variety of motives and combinations, which make each vessel a unique specimen. The decoration of the closed shapes however, is more standardized (PSARAKI 2004, 238-239, 267).

The increased presence of the matt-painted ware at Thessaloniki Toumba during phase 5 and its particular features signify a wider acceptance and a more frequent performance of the festive practices that were initiated in the previous period, and of the consumptive formalities that were associated with these practices. It appears that during phase V the painted vessels were not simply markers of the festive character of the occasions of food and drink consumption, but at the same time they would probably contribute to the construction of special identities for a small number of people, who had access to their use and display. There are certain arguments, which support this interpretation. The matt-painted bowls, jars and jugs remained always few at Thessaloniki Toumba, despite the considerable increase in their number from phase VI (Fig. 3)⁶. Their technological characteristics indicate that they were only produced by a small number of producers who supplied with their luxurious and specialized products several settlements in a wide area (KIRIATZI 2000, 256-57). Furthermore, the variability of the decorative features of the bowls possibly indicates the uniqueness of each vessel



Pl. 7. Mycenaean style deep bowl. Phase IV.



Pl. 8. Mycenaean style cup. Phase IV.



Pl. 9. Mycenaean style crater. Phase IV.

and its value as a marker of the identity of its owner (PSARAKI 2004, 267, 269). Compared to the undecorated „tableware" vessels from the same phase, which imply common use and em-

⁶ Although it can not be supported with quantitative data yet, one has the impression that the amount of matt-painted ware at Thessaloniki Toumba is larger than at the contemporary sites of Kastanas and Assiros Toumbas

(HOCHSTETTER 1984; Wardle, *personal communication*). If this would be the case, it could imply differentiated access to this particular ware on the regional level.

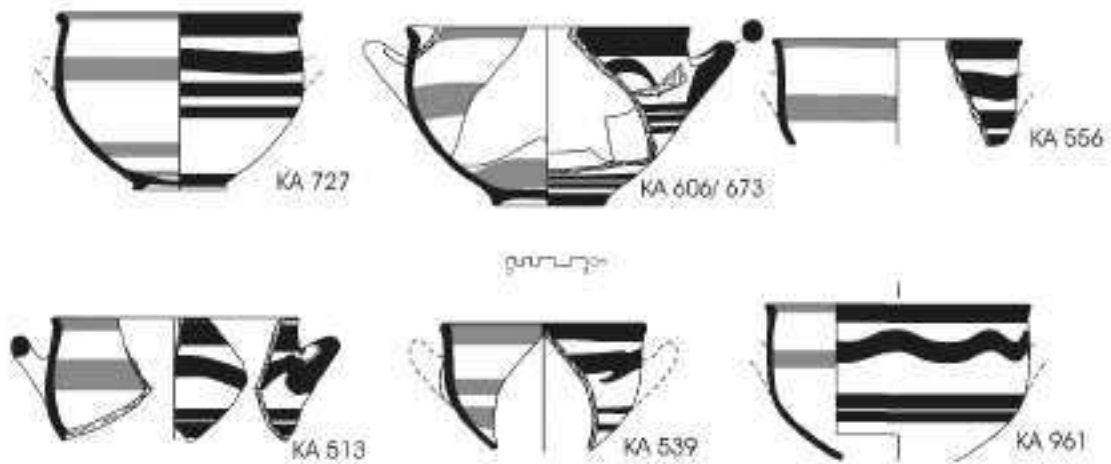


Figure 16. Mycenaean style deep bowls . Phase IV

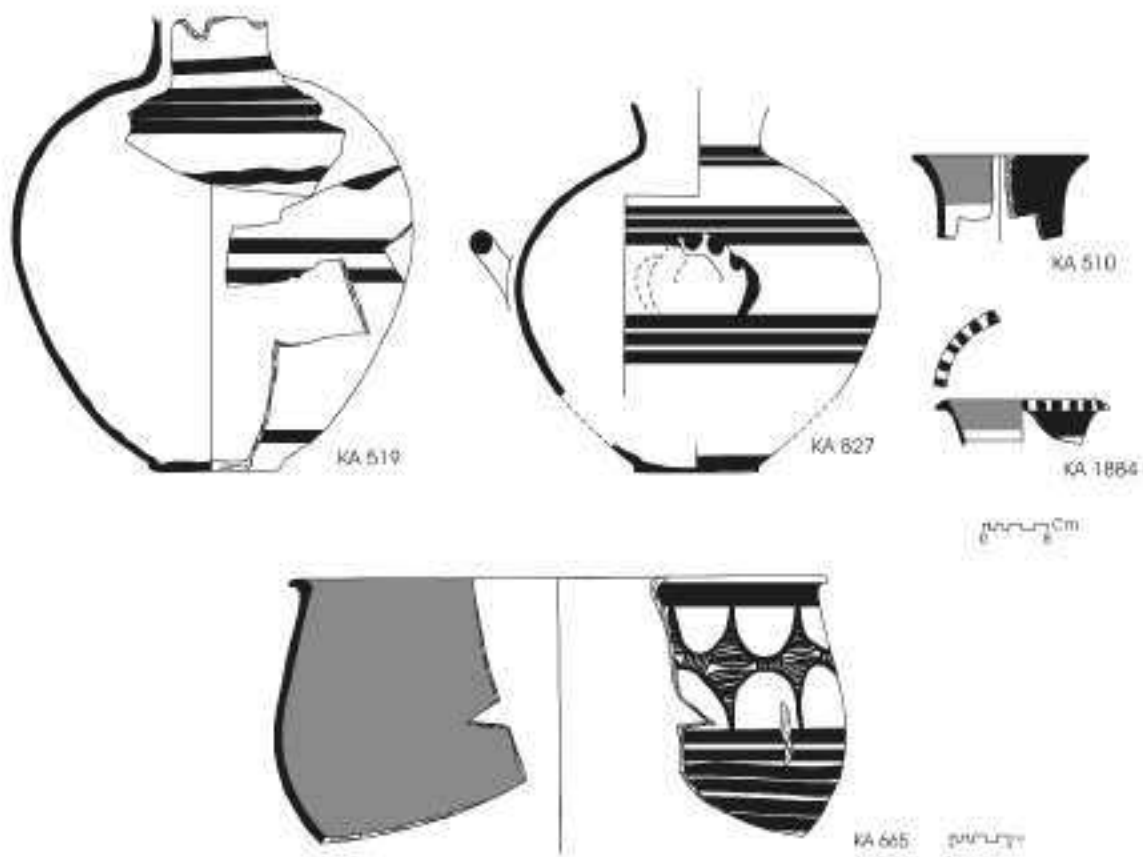


Fig. 17. Mycenaean style amphoras and crater Phase IV.

phasis on the collective aspects of consumption, massive production, wider circulation and unrestricted access, we would like to suggest that the painted vessels can be better understood as personal objects accessible only to certain individuals or groups of special status. Their use

possibly emphasized the privilege of their owners to organize the feasting events during which the particular vessels were displayed in drinking ceremonies. It was pointed out earlier in this paper that the rise of unstable relations of social complexity and of transient networks of hierar-

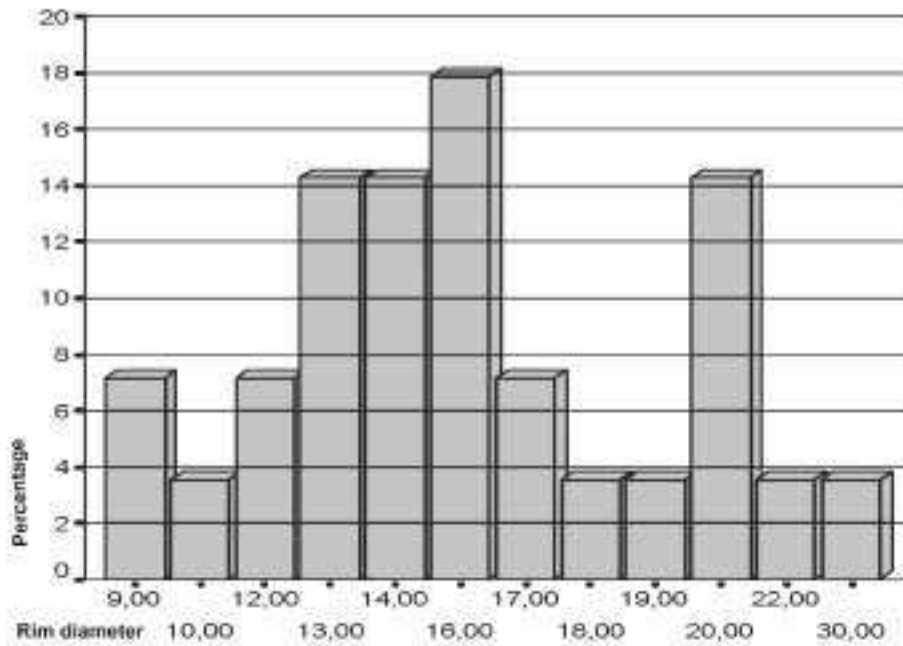


Fig. 18 . Size variation of the matt-painted style open shapes.

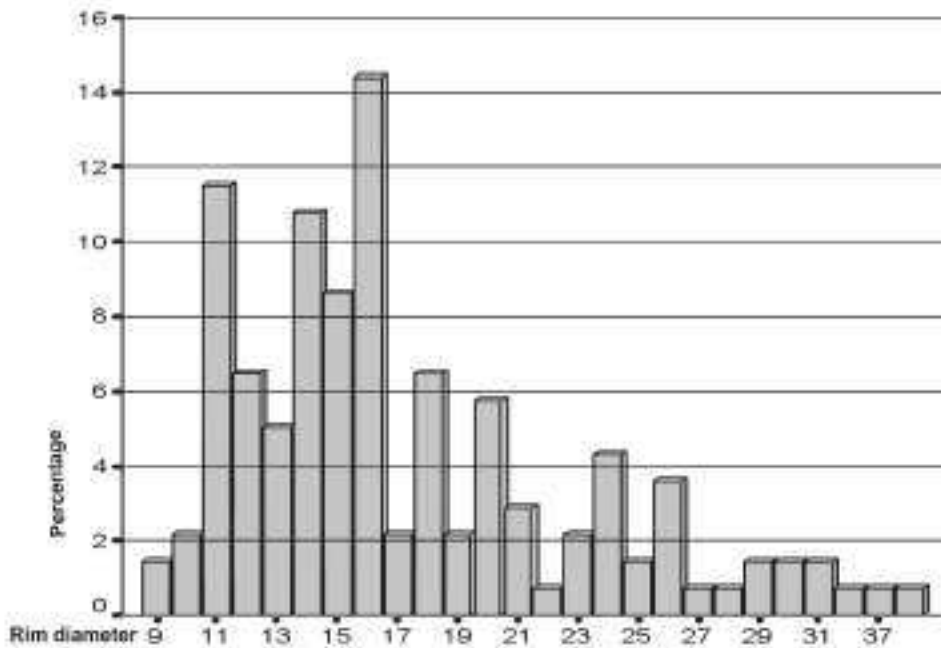


Fig. 19. Size variation of the Mycenaean style open shapes.

chical political organization are evident at Toumba and in the area during the later part of the Late Bronze Age. We suggest then, that the ceremonial occasions of food and drink consumption, where the matt-painted vessels were used at the time of phase V, would be integral parts of the strategies employed by traditional leading

figures to create elitist identities and stronger and more permanent structures of communal and regional control and authority (ANDREOU 2003; cf. DIETLER 1990). Considering the small size of the settlements, these events would not have to be of any large scale, particularly if they only concerned certain household heads or spe-

cific individuals⁷.

Significantly enough the earliest Mycenaean style pottery (LHIIIA2/IIIB) at the site occurred in small numbers at Toumba in phase V, at the time the mattpainted vessels were at the peak of their use⁸. We would like to suggest that initially the Mycenaean style pottery was introduced unsystematically at Thessaloniki Toumba and at other sites in the region, in the form of occasional imports, by the organizers of the feasting events, to be used along the mattpainted ware. Nevertheless, very soon the exotic wheelmade vessels were adopted locally for certain of their qualities. This prompted the transformation of the original meaning of feasting, instigated the intensification of such events and contributed to changes in the local social setting (ANDREOU 2003).

The Mycenaean style pottery at Thessaloniki Toumba and in other settlements of the region displays certain features, which leave little doubt that it comprised mainly special serving sets for the consumption of wine in festive occasions, with an important drinking component (KIRIATZI et al. 1997; ANDREOU et al. 2001, 326 and n. 486; ANDREOU 2002-03; WARDLE et al. 2002; JUNG 2004; Jung 2003). It has been argued that the specific demand on the part of the local communities for luxury vessels for wine consumption determined the adoption of only a select number of decorated type-shapes, such as deep bowls, cups, craters, jugs and amphoras (Fig. 15, 16, 17. Pl. 7, 8, 9) (ANDREOU 2003).

The association of the particular Mycenaean style vessels at Thessaloniki Toumba and elsewhere with the festive consumption of wine is founded on arguments related primarily to their assumed use in the Mycenaean regions of central and southern Greece. On the other hand winemaking (or making of a similar alcoholic beverage) has a history in Northern Greece, which goes back to the middle of the 5th millennium (MANGAFA/KOTSAKIS 1996; VAL-

AMOTI 1998). Consequently it would be reasonable to expect that it would have always played a significant role in feasting events. For this reason it has been suggested that the rise of the mattpainted service sets in the earlier Late Bronze Age signified an important turn in the formalization of the act of wine drinking during feasts. The adoption of a particular decorated ware signaled at the same time a special symbolic bond between wine consumption and the rise of local elites (ANDREOU 2003a).

Several indications support the argument that the Mycenaean sets gradually replaced the mattpainted as luxurious wine drinking sets. Both sets were focused on the consumption of liquids and both were decorated. Their range of sizes was very close and their adoption and abandonment followed a contrasting quantitative fluctuation (Fig. 18, 19 and 3). In fact, by phase IV at Thessaloniki Toumba, the Mycenaean deep bowls and cups had replaced almost totally the mattpainted bowls and only the mattpainted jars and probably some jugs were still being used (PSARAKI 2004, 245).

Some important differences however, between the handmade mattpainted and the wheelmade Mycenaean style wares were crucial for the replacement of the former by the latter and for the quick intensification of the feasting occasions, which is indicated by the sudden rise of the Mycenaean style pottery, the early growth of local production of Mycenaean style pottery and the indications of winemaking at Toumba in phase IV (MANGAFA et al., 1998; ANDREOU 2003). The same differences prevented the hybridization between the local and foreign wares, a phenomenon which is observed very rarely during the Late Bronze Age in the region (JUNG 2003).

As opposed to the mattpainted, the Mycenaean style vessels were completely foreign, technologically, stylistically and conceptually to the local ceramic tradition (KIRIATZI 2000, 223-

⁷ It is not possible to say at this stage where these feasts would be taking place. The excavated part of phase IV indicates a very dense habitation pattern on the top of the mound. The top of the casemated wall on the edge was however, spacious enough to hold communal gatherings. There are spaces up to 25 sq. m. in the houses, which could accommodate small gatherings of people. It is hoped that the analysis of the distribution of the rel-

evant finds (bones, plant remains, shells, pottery), which is in progress will be able to shed some light on this issue. For some interesting results from an analysis of this type at the Kastanas Toumba, a contemporary settlement with a different lay out, see BECKER 1995. Actually the part of a handle of what probably was an early Mycenaean cup was found together with the earliest mattpainted pottery in phase VI.

26, 256-62). This quality of foreignness and long distance origin was probably an important factor for the initial introduction of the earliest imported Mycenaean drinking pots as prestige objects into the local festive settings, where the matt-painted vessels were dominant (KIRIATZI et al. 1997). On the other hand, the different origin (at the very beginning of the process) and the important technological differences (soon after) meant that the Mycenaean style pottery was totally unrelated to the network through which the matt-painted ware was produced and circulated in the area (BUXEDA I GARRIGOS et al. 2003; KIRIATZI 2000, 256). This could probably mean that local elites were able to manipulate traditional links to control the access to production and circulation of the handmade decorated wares. The absence however, of centralized institutions and long-lasting structures of regional hierarchization and political control, along with the decentralized and often opportunistic nature of the Mycenaean trade would prevent an effective control over the circulation of the Mycenaean style pottery by the local leaders (cf. DIETLER 1990; SHERRATT 2001). As a result, the introduction of the wheelmade pottery would offer an opportunity to those households and groups who had the material means, but not the appropriate equipment, to emulate the feasting etiquette of the traditional elite through the preparation of feasting events. Through this process they could not only bypass the established social restrictions and rules, but could attain a new status, widen their influence, acquire more power and reinterpret the traditional social boundaries and identities. It was probably this "subversive" quality of the Mycenaean pottery, which to a large extent depended on its

very specific function and on the very different production and circulation network, that was probably responsible for the very small amount of hybridization between the handmade and the wheelmade components of the ceramic repertoire.

Granted the very limited number and opportunistic flow of imports, it is not surprising that the rising local demand led soon to the local production of wheelmade pottery and to the significant increase in the amount of Mycenaean style vessels in phase IV, during the 12th century. For the same reasons, the wheelmade pottery spread widely to most settlements regardless of their location, size and complexity (cf. JUNG 2002). Nevertheless, the absence of large political entities, the organization of settlements in small and unstable networks and possibly the antagonistic relations between communities encouraged the dispersed, small scale and non intensive production and circulation of the wheelmade pottery on the regional level. In this respect, the diversions from the patterns of production and distribution of the handmade wares were not immensely different (ANDREOU et al. 2002).

The fact that Mycenaean vessels during phase IV have been found in all the excavated houses of the Thessaloniki Toumba may indicate that the adoption of Mycenaean style pottery had led to a reinterpretation of the symbolic meaning of feasts and ceremonial drinking in the society of the Thessaloniki Toumba. Instead of amplifying traditional inequalities, positions of power and statuses, feasts during the 12th century provided the opportunity for the better integration of households and the creation of larger and stronger groups in the community.

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