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THE PROBLEM OF REGIONAL VARIATION OF MYCENAEAN IIIC:1 POTTERY: THE VIEW FROM CYPRUS

Introduction

In creating typologies of the ceramics dating to the period after Late Cypriot IIC (LC IIC), scholars have long assumed that the destructions at sites such as Enkomi and Ayios Dhimitrios represented an invasion of Aegean refugees, and corresponded in time to the destructions in Greece at the end of the Late Helladic IIIB (LH IIIB) and beginning of the LH IIIC. Consequently, the pottery associated with the new settlements established after these destructions was named "Mycenaean IIIC:1" (hereafter Myc IIIC:1), due to its resemblance to Aegean wares, while its similarity to the local Late Bronze Age (LBA) White Painted Wheelmade tradition has largely been ignored; the local Base Ring and White Slip wares associated with it were considered intrusions from earlier strata.

This paper will re-examine the evidence used to classify the so-called Mycenaean IIIC:1 wares on Cyprus as either imports or local imitations. While most of the characterization studies of this distinctive pottery have attempted to establish its provenience (see for example, Dothan and Zukerman 2004), only limited compositional analyses have been conducted thus far either on Cyprus or elsewhere (for an exception, see Badre et al. 2005) to try to answer the question of whether it was imported, was a local imitation of an Aegean ceramic industry, or was made by resettled Aegean potters who sought to continue production of a long-standing ceramic tradition, perhaps with local influence, but retaining familiar paste recipes.

Although Cyprus also suffered destructions at the transition from LC IIC to LC IIIA similar to those that occurred in the other major centres of civilization around the Mediterranean at the end of the Late Bronze Age, it never suffered on the same scale (Karageorghis 1990; 1992). Some new settlements were established, such as those at Pyla Kokkinokremos and Maa Palaikastro, but these were short-lived. The material culture of the people who founded these new settlements, as well as those who seem to have been responsible for rebuilding some of the destroyed towns, has long been recognized as a blend of Levantine and local Cypriot cultures (Cadogan 1993: 82).

Early Ceramic Studies

While there has been considerable attention given to classifying Cypriot wares, it was not until the 1960s and the introduction of analytical

methods capable of characterizing the chemistry and mineralogy of pottery, that distinctive potting traditions could be identified based on their physical composition. Most of the early studies involved chemical analyses, and they generally confirmed that the finest fabrics found on Cyprus bearing Mycenaean shapes matched wares found in the Peloponnese, while the Myc IIIC:1 pottery did not match Aegean sources (Kling 1989: 92). Neutron Activation Analysis suggested that most of the Myc IIIA-B pottery found on Cyprus, especially at Enkomi, was manufactured at Tiryns where, along with Boeotian Thebes and Perati, most of the Cypriot pottery in the Aegean has been found (Asaro and Perlman 1973: 220; Cline 1994: 62). While these studies have demonstrated that most, if not all the Mycenaean LH IIIB wares were indeed products of the Greek mainland, it has remained uncertain whether the Myc IIIC:1 pottery found on Cyprus was locally made, or was imported from different parts of Greece, perhaps Crete, or from the Levant.

Petrographic and chemical analyses have been conducted on a wide variety of Cypriot wares (see for example, King et al. 1986; King 1987; Knapp and Cherry 1994; Myer et al. 1995; Bryan et al. 1997; Day 1999; Gomez et al. 1995; Gomez and Doherty 2000; Gomez et al. 2002; Vaughan 1991; 2002), but the analysis has been uneven, and there remains no complete record of the full range of local clay sources needed to provenience assemblages. For example, a petrographic study of Red Polished, Black Polished and White Painted (handmade) wares from Cyprus was able to conclude that all of these wares were made from the same "light-coloured, calcareous, sedimentary clays derived from the chalks and marls of the Lefkara formation" (Barlow 1994: 7). However, although Barlow was able to determine that the White Painted wares found at Alambra were made of clay from two different sources, not enough comparative evidence was available to determine whether one or both types were imported to the area.

The primary Cypriot potting traditions at the end of the Late Bronze Age were Base Ring, White Slip, and White Painted Wheelmade wares. According to Jones (1986), Base Ring wares occur in two distinct fabrics. Base Ring I is fine grey or light brown in colour, and has a red slip which appears metallic. Base Ring II is coarser, contains sand and mica, and tends to have a more matte-like slip. White Slip wares are made from a type of clay that fires red, and contains microlithic or vitreous basic rocks possibly derived from the Troodos mountain range. According to Jones, the only place this pottery could have been made, considering both the petrographic and chemical evidence, was in the metal-bearing zones of the Troodos (1986: 341).

At the end of the LC II period, the quantity of imported Mycenaean pottery increased substantially, concentrated "in the major urban centres and emporia along the south and east coast, such as Enkomi, Kition, Hala Sultan Tekke, Maroni, Kourion" (Steel 1998: 286), though it still only represented a small fraction of the assemblages at these sites. The Pastoral (Rude) style, which developed from the Mycenaean Pictorial style of LH IIIB, seems to have been produced at a number of sites, but was certainly made on Cyprus (Knapp and Cherry 1994: 159). The clay body is light in colour and relatively free of inclusions, which is also true of the White

Painted Wheelmade wares that make their appearance in Cyprus at this time alongside the local handmade wares. The introduction of the potter's wheel may be an indication of increased urbanization and the beginning of full-time workshop large-scale production of ceramics, likely for export (Sillar and Tite 2000: 7). Enkomi appears to have been the main centre of production, but there may also have been a workshop at Kition that imitated the Enkomi potting styles (Anson 1980). It is interesting to note that at Enkomi, the Pastoral Style continued from the LC IIC into the LC IIIA period, where it occurs together with the appearance of Myc IIIC:1 pottery.

Cypriot Mycenaean IIIC:1 Pottery

Cypriot Mycenaean IIIC:1 pottery, or Åström's White Painted Wheelmade III type, is distinguished by its light coloured clay fabric and matte-painted decoration. Morphologically, a great variety of shapes occur, as do the range of decorative motifs, which take their inspiration from Aegean, Levantine and local Cypriot traditions. There also appears to be some regional variation within Cyprus itself, presumably a reflection of multiple production centres on the island (Kling 2000: 282).

As many have argued, Myc IIIC:1 pottery appears to have taken its inspiration from contemporary Aegean styles, indicating a continuation of contacts between Cyprus and possibly Crete during the early years of the period, but "it gives the impression of selective eclecticism mixed with a healthy dose of local improvisation, rather than the transferred ceramic packages of any discrete groups of people" (Sherratt 1998: 298). Unfortunately, this material has not received the attention given to similar assemblages found in the Aegean and the Levant, and more chemical and petrographic analysis is needed on both the White Painted Wheelmade wares and the Myc IIIC:1 pottery found on Cyprus.

Discussion

Before asking why the potters of Cyprus and the eastern Mediterranean chose to imitate Late Helladic potting traditions, it might be best to ask why there was a demand for the imported Pictorial Style of the LH IIIB period. The increase in Mycenaean imported drinking sets coincided with the urbanization of LBA Cyprus. Urbanization brought with it a concentration of wealth and an emerging elite. These elite legitimized their status through lavish displays of funerary wealth, as well as drinking rituals. These forms of aristocratic display were widespread not only on Cyprus, but throughout the ancient Near Eastern world (Steel 1998: 289–90). It would appear that in the LBA eastern Mediterranean, elite identity was reinforced through use of Mycenaean drinking vessels, as evidenced by their preponderance in élite tombs (Steel 1998: 292), and structures such as Building X (and its associated brick-lined pit) at Kalavassos Ayios Dhimitros (South and Russell 1993: 304).

As the supply of Mycenaean imports dwindled, it would appear that Cypriot potters began to produce their own Pastoral Style, presumably to satisfy continuing elite demand. The Pastoral Style was used mainly to decorate kraters, while shallow bowls, already available in the Plain White

Wheelmade III tradition, were also decorated with Mycenaean-inspired motifs. The emerging White Painted Wheelmade III style was a fusion of Mycenaean shapes and decorations with local Cypriot ones (Cadogan 1993: 94). Cyprus also appears to have been the primary distributor of Aegean goods in the eastern Mediterranean during the 14th and 13th centuries, since Cypriot wares are almost always found together with Myc IIIC:1 pottery (Sherratt 1998: 296). When the demand for Mycenaean products could no longer be met, it would not have been difficult for Cypriot potters to supply this demand with their own products, or with new wares that resembled Mycenaean traditions. Unlike the palatial centres in the Aegean, control of the potting industry seems to have been in the hands of entrepreneurs operating out of major port centres such as Enkomi (Sherratt 1998: 298; 2003).

Alternatively, from the available evidence, it is also possible to argue that this distinctive potting tradition was being produced by displaced Aegean craftsmen. The potters who produced the Mycenaean style wares in the Levant deliberately chose light-coloured calcareous clays to form their vessels. In contrast, the clays used to make Cypriot wares, such as the Red Polished, Black Polished and White Painted wares found at Alambra, visually resemble the clays with which the Mycenaean Pictorial Style was made. Thus, imitation would only have required changing manufacturing techniques, in particular the shift from handmade to wheelmade production. However, Late Bronze Age clay sources appear to have been different, containing iron oxides that would have made the clay fire to a red colour unlike the Mycenaean wares. Potters on Cyprus would have known where the clay beds used to produce the handmade White Painted wares were located, thus it would not be unreasonable to assume that they could have exploited these clay beds to make a more "Mycenaean" looking ware. Clay sources can be exploited for centuries, and paste recipes can remain unchanged, even though the styles produced change (Day 2004: 110). In an analysis of wares found at Ephesus, for example, spanning a period of over one thousand years, from the Late Bronze Age until the Hellenistic period, Kerschner found that the fabric was remarkably homogeneous throughout, indicating that the same clay beds were used, and the clay processed consistently in the same way throughout that time (2005: 36).

Similarly, in a recent ethnographic study, Day found that itinerant potters from Thrapsano on Crete set up temporary workshops in areas where there was a clay source suitable to make a specific type of large storage jar, while potters from Kentri, also on Crete, but who are sedentary, followed a very specific recipe comprised of red and white clays to make their smaller vessels. The Thrapsano potters "adhered to a specific, suitable clay mix, the raw materials of which were available throughout the island in such formations as the Phyllite-Quartz Series" (Day 2004: 120), which made their wares appear very uniform, even though they were produced in many different locations. Their storage jars were well-known and highly sought after vessels on Crete. The Kentri potters, on the other hand, were tied to the area in which they worked because of the special clay sources required to make their distinctive vessels. When they did move, due to marriage or other reasons, they sought out clay

sources with the same properties needed to make their famous water jars (Day 2004: 128). In some cases, when a potter moved they would attempt to replicate local shapes, but were reluctant to change their paste recipes (Day 2004: 130–31).

Assuming LBA potters had similar habits, it is thus conceivable that Aegean potters might have traveled to Cyprus in the LC IIC period and then sought out new clay sources to produce the Pastoral Style pottery that imitated the Mycenaean Pictorial wares with which they were familiar. The shapes and decorations might have changed to accommodate local Cypriot and Levantine tastes, while the paste recipe remained unchanged. The Myc IIIC:1 wares that appear in the Levant, therefore, might just as plausibly represent the product of displaced Aegean potters, as of Cypriots trained in Aegean potting techniques.

Unfortunately, the primary obstacle to a better understanding of Mycenaean IIIC:1 pottery is that it has never been studied systematically across all of the regions where it has been found. Researchers have tended to study only the material from their region. Further complicating matters, some studies have focused only on stylistic aspects, while others have emphasized petrographic or chemical analyses. What is needed, therefore, is a broad-based, systematic characterization of assemblages from all represented areas in the eastern Mediterranean, involving both petrographic and chemical analyses. Only then will it be possible to determine more confidently whether this ceramic tradition was the product of a relatively uniform production process or, more likely, a diverse, highly regionalized enterprise encompassing numerous traditions and raw material sources.

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