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Disruptive Dining: The Etiquette of LM II at Knossos

ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to the wider discourse that sees LM II as a period of disruption, innovation and change. By tracking the metrical and volumetric attributes of the most popular pattern-painted tableware shapes in LM IB, LM II and LM IIIA:1, the paper argues that a distinct dining set, and by extension etiquette, can be defined for LM II. The emergence of this dining set, and its subsequent dissolution in LM III:A1, ask broader questions of the nature of culture change in this fast-moving period, particularly given the appearance but also disappearance of certain Mycenaean-derived elements in the tableware assemblages of post-Neopalatial Knossos. Noting certain differences between Knossian and well-published assemblages from the Peloponnese, it is argued that we should view the selection and adaptation of these vessels into the assemblage as being locally stimulated and inspired, rather than as the result of some external population change or imposition.

KEYWORDS: Knossos, pottery, Late Minoan II, culture change, Ephyraean goblet, Minoan, Mycenaean, tableware, dining practices, volumetrics, volumes

INTRODUCTION

This paper evaluates the metrical and volumetric attributes of the main pattern-painted tableware shapes at Knossos between LM IB-LM IIIA:1. It is argued that in LM II we can detect a suite of vessels that were manufactured with reference to one another, representing material evidence of a specific dining etiquette that only existed during LM II. Further afield, this contributes to the wider understanding of LM II as a period of cultural innovation, as understood from architecture (Warren 1983), iconography (Galanakis et al. 2017), burial customs (Preston 2000; Galanakis 2022), and wider social structure (Hatzaki 2018). In addition, this paper asks broader questions about the changing ceramic assemblage, and the relationship between Knossos and Mycenaean Greece.

ETIQUETTE AND CERAMIC CHANGE

Underlying this paper is the notion of etiquette. As documented in Greece and elsewhere, food and drink, particularly when consumed in the context of formalised “feasting”, play a significant role in delineating social relationships, either in terms of integration or exclusion (e.g., Goody 1982; Dietler and Hayden 2001; Halstead and Barrett 2004; Wright 2004a). Performing such activities involves etiquette – knowledge of the appropriate behaviour, with ignorance potentially having negative social consequences. Although much of this social interplay is lost, some material traces remain. Material culture associated with consumption plays an essential role in framing these activities – specialised cookware (Lis 2017), cuisine (Isaakidou 2016), or services of vessels (e.g., Wright 2004b). Observing moments of significant change in the material culture can indirectly allow the identification of changing dining etiquette, especially with regard to the fastest changing decorated pottery.

METHODOLOGY, DATA, PROBLEMS

To assess the etiquette of LM II, this paper explores a dataset drawn from published LM IB-LM IIIA:1 tableware (space permits only a selection: Hood and De Jong 1952; Popham 1970, 1984; Popham et al. 1974; Catling et al. 1979; Momigliano and Hood 1994; Mountjoy 2003; Hatzaki 2005; Preston 2007; Hood 2011; Warren 1998, 2011; Rethemiotakis and Warren 2014; Oddo 2022), focusing on typology, rim diameter as a proxy for size, and volume using the Brussels Capacity Calculator (<https://capacity.ulb.be/>). This approach focuses attention on the affordances of the vessels as reflections of behavioural expectations, rather than contextual associations. This does not mean that context is irrelevant, rather that insight can also be drawn from a site-wide perspective. Even the best documented primary contexts do not necessarily represent functional use, but may contain objects deposited in storage, or between uses (Sullivan 1978, 194-203; Popham 1984, 159-160; Whitelaw 2014, 253). Finally, previous studies of dining sets or practices (e.g., Borgna 2004; Day and Wilson 2004; Rutter 2004; Wright 2004; Haggis 2007; Whitelaw 2014), have also used synthetic approaches.

The site-wide approach allows the mitigation of certain problems in the study of Knossian pottery: discard, uneven publication, and stylistic dating. As a problematic, discard affects fine decorated material less than plain or monochrome tableware (Popham 1970, 11-15), and thus the record is reasonably reliable. Regarding the latter problems, the decision was taken to maximise the sample to encompass all material, including that which is stylistically dated (e.g., Mountjoy 2003; Oddo 2022). This reduces the effect of uneven publication, where some important deposits have received only preliminary publication. Regarding stylistic dating particularly, it is noted that the features of Knossian decorated pottery are extremely well known, so it is unlikely entire patterns will be obscured.

A database was constructed documenting all published open vessels for which a rim diameter was either recorded or measurable from a drawing. Discussion is limited at this stage to open pots, given the typically more fragmentary nature of closed vessels. Rim diameter is the primary variable for understanding changes in size, because it is measurable even from fragmentary vessels, and in open shapes tends to be a reliable proxy for total size.

In addition, volume measurements were taken of both complete vessels, and also the *minimum preserved volume* (MPV) of incomplete pots. While complete pots are ideal, whole pots from settlement contexts are rare and often too few to give useful patterns. MPVs act as a secondary variable. Because fragmentation is random, MPVs cannot be used as the primary dataset, but may offer corroboration to diameter or complete pot patterns. In most Minoan open shapes the rim diameter and maximum diameter are similar, meaning that sherds from close to the top of the vessel often preserve significant proportions of the total volume. The data was sorted into increments of 2 cm or 200 ml, and organised by percentage.

THE LM II PATTERN PAINTED ASSEMBLAGE

The three most common pattern-painted open shapes of LM II are the rounded cup, goblet, and horizontal-handled bowl (Hatzaki 2007, figs. 6.3.3, 6.2.1-4, 6.3.2). Although other pattern-painted shapes are documented, these three comprise the majority of the assemblage (Popham 1984, 159-181; Rutter 2017, 154-183). The most popular of these, the goblet, is a well known mainland-derived addition to the Knossian tableware assemblage. Decorated in either the “Ephyraean” style, or with more Minoan circumcurrent motifs (Popham 1984, 166-168. Rutter 2023), it has attracted significant attention in wider claims of a Mycenaean takeover of Crete (e.g., Popham 1984, 263; Brogan, Smith and Soles 2002; Wiener 2015 among many.)

However, the Cretan goblet (Popham 1969) is *heavily* adapted from its Mycenaean counterpart, regarding its manufacture (French 1997, 151), decorative range (Popham 1969; Mountjoy 1983, 270; French 1997, 151-152), and the use of filling motifs (Mountjoy 1983, 270; Popham 1984, 166-167), though also in functional terms. Cretan goblets divide into large and small versions (Mountjoy 2003, 121; Rutter 2017 160). The small version is not attested in well published LH IIB settlement groups (Frizell 1980; Rutter 2020, 657-727; Sturge 2020) and is seemingly a Cretan adaptation. Finally, there seems little evidence on Crete for the wider “Ephyraean Assemblage” (Rutter 2023, 147-152). While the mainland antecedents of the LM II goblet are clear, local, rather than external factors may lie behind its adoption and use.

The horizontal-handled bowl was popular in LM II (Popham 1984, 164-165; Mountjoy 2003, 119-120; Rutter 2017, 162-163), although the earliest examples at Knossos are found in LM IB (Hood 2011, figs. 23, 24). At Kommos, with its tripartite division of LM IB (Rutter 2011), the shape gains popularity in LM IB Final (Rutter 2017, 140). If LM IB Final at Kommos is synchronous with key stratified Knossian LM IB deposits (Rutter 2011, Table 4), then it would appear the shape is an innovation late in the period, after the decline in popularity of the MM III-LM I in-and-out bowl (Mountjoy 2003, 104; Hatzaki 2007, 177).

The final shape is the pattern-painted rounded cup. This is another shape with a long Cretan ancestry (Macgillivray 1998, 75-77). Although its morphological proportions change over time, allowing its dating, the shape itself is a constant presence in Cretan decorated pottery from the Protopalatial to the Postpalatial. This makes the shape useful as a focus for discussing changing etiquette between LM IB and LM IIIA:1.

LM IB: FOUNDATIONS

In LM IB, despite being poorly published at Knossos (Catling et al. 1979; Mountjoy 2003, 78-105; Hood 2011; Warren 2011; Oddo 2022), it is clear that the most popular pattern-painted open shape was the rounded cup (Hood 2011, 159, fig. 14). Earlier Neopalatial open shapes, such as the straight-sided cup, Vapheio cup, or in-and-out bowl had lost popularity (Mountjoy 2003, 103). Those continuing (reed cups, bell cups) form a minority of the assemblage, while the new horizontal-handled bowl appears late. This pattern can also be tracked outside Knossos, and seems to be pan-Cretan (papers in Brogan and Hallager 2011).

Fig. 1 shows the rim diameters of LM IB rounded cups. The shape exhibits a wide range of rim diameters, although there is a peak in the 13-14.9cm range, and the majority of examples fall between 11-14.9cm. Despite its name, its predominance, combined with its broad size range and morphological affordances such as the addition of a spout suggests it likely performed a multifunctional role as both a drinking and eating vessel (Popham 1970, 79, of the LM IIIA version).

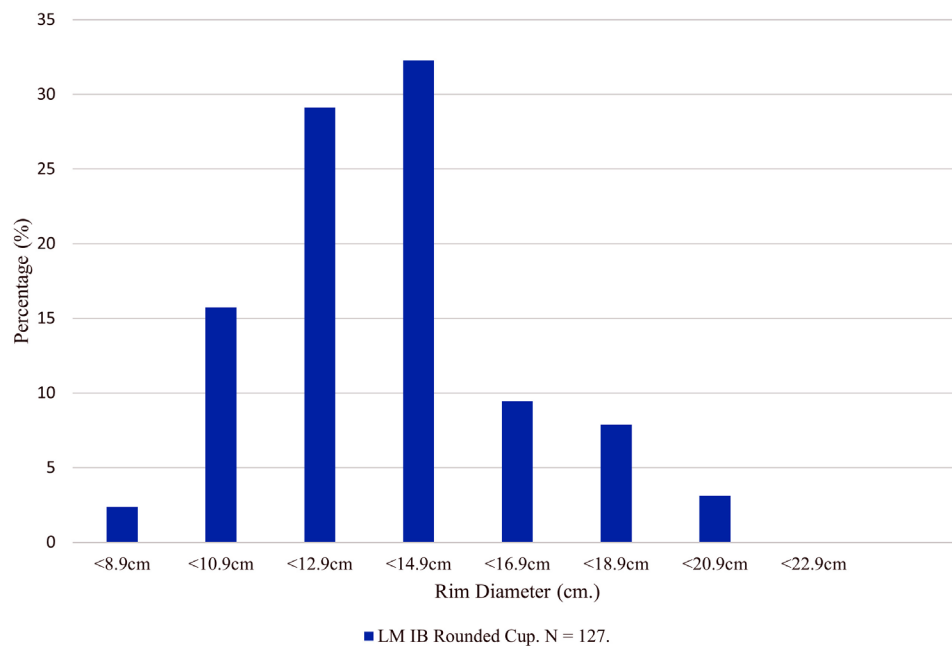


Fig. 1. Rim diameters of published rounded cups from Knossos.

This multifunctionality is supported by the volumetric data. Fig. 2 shows the volume of whole vessels. There is a preference for medium sized vessels, with most cups having a capacity between 600 ml to 1 litre, although there are few complete examples. Fig. 3 expands the analysis to MPVs. As expected, the pattern is different, with a higher representation of vessels in the 0.2-0.4 L range. This is no surprise, since the minima are an under-representation of size. Taking this into account, the range is comparable to that preserved by complete vessels. The presence of large vessels above a litre is significant, as it may suggest that the rounded cups now fulfilled some of the functions of the defunct in-and-out bowl. Overall, the combined diameter and capacity information strongly supports the argument that the rounded cup in LM IB served a multifunctional role, with both individual and perhaps shared vessels manufactured.

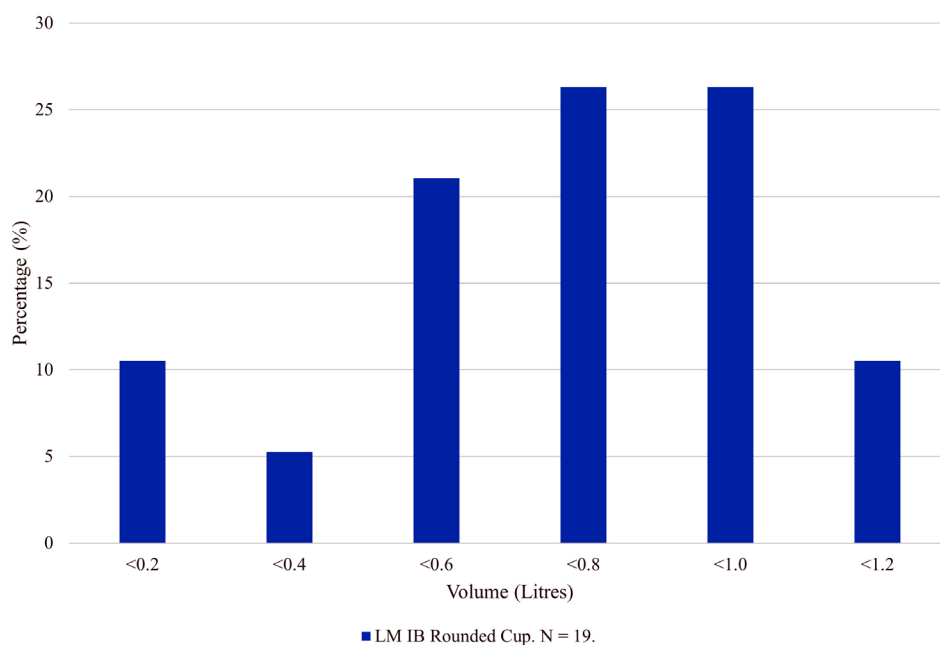


Fig. 2. Volumes of complete published LM IB rounded cups from Knossos.

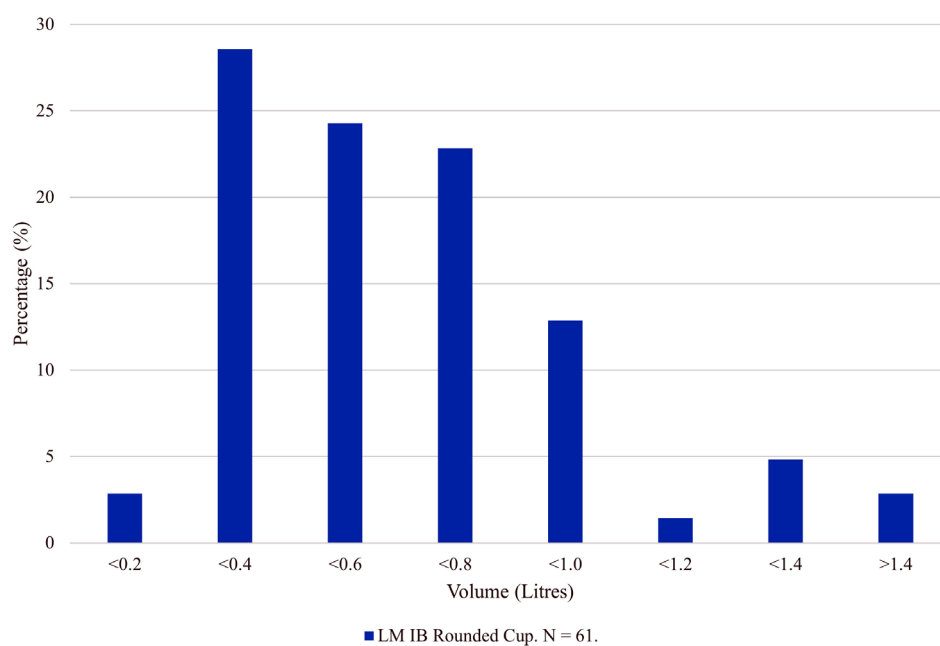


Fig. 3. Volumetric data for complete and fragmentary (MPV) published LM IB rounded cups from Knossos.

LM II: A NEW DINING PACKAGE

The situation changed dramatically in LM II. The rounded cup ceased to be the most popular pattern-painted shape, and was replaced by the goblet (Popham 1984, 165). Additionally, there was a functional change. Fig. 4 shows the rim diameter range of LM II pattern-painted cups. The

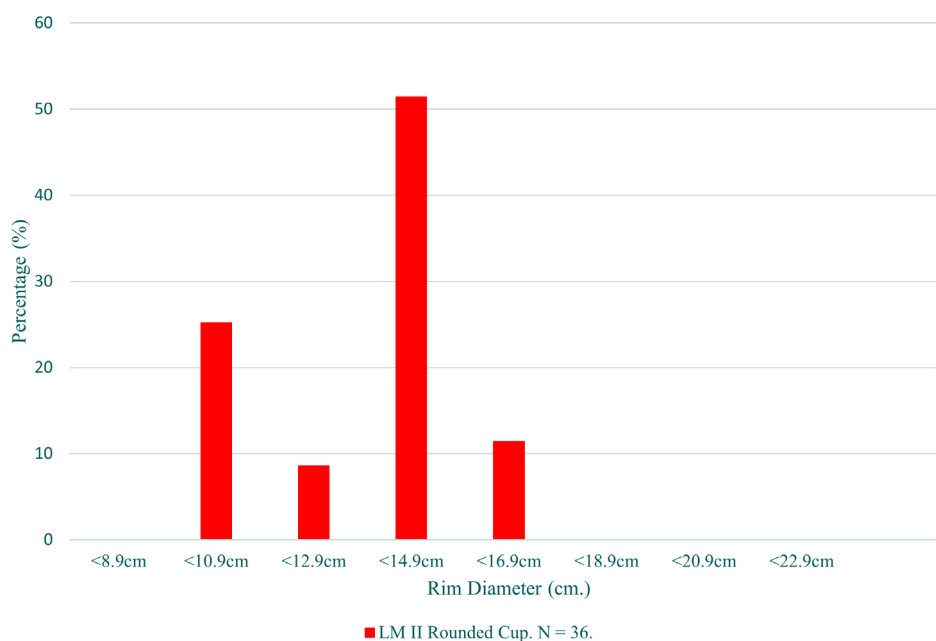


Fig.4. Rim diameters of all published LM II rounded cups from Knossos.

pattern is different from LM IB with two clear peaks, the largest of which is in the 13-14.9 cm range, as in LM IB. Examining the lower (9-10.9 cm) peak, it is comprised entirely of “stipple and lunate” or “blob” cups, which are syntactically and morphologically distinct from rounded cups (e.g., Popham 1984, pl.156.5, 160.2-3). Excluding these, the impression of standardisation becomes even more exaggerated (Fig. 5), and can be further seen in the narrow range of volumes

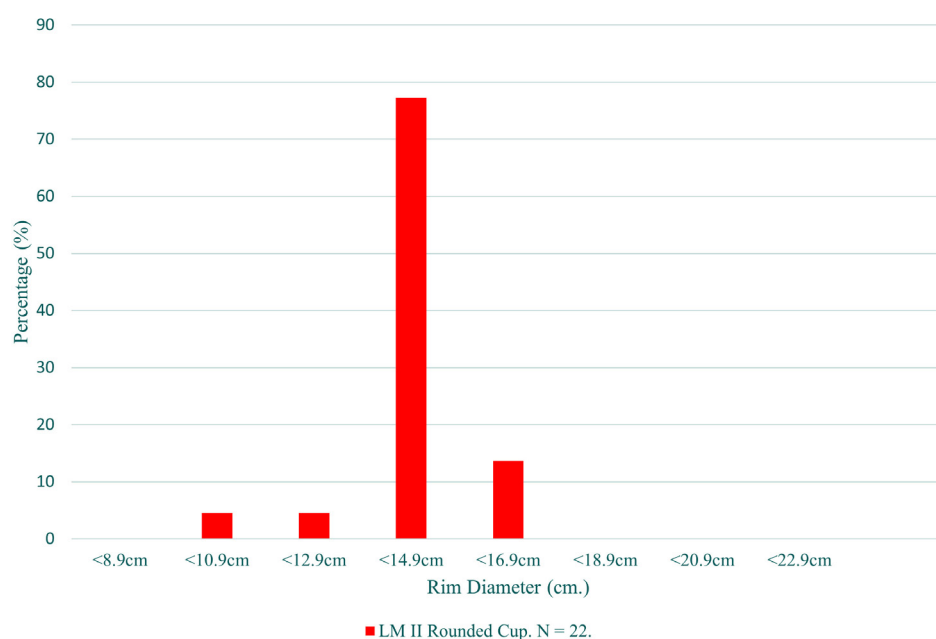


Fig. 5. Rim diameters of only pattern-painted published LM II rounded cups from Knossos (excluding “stipple and lunate” and “blob” decorative syntaxes).

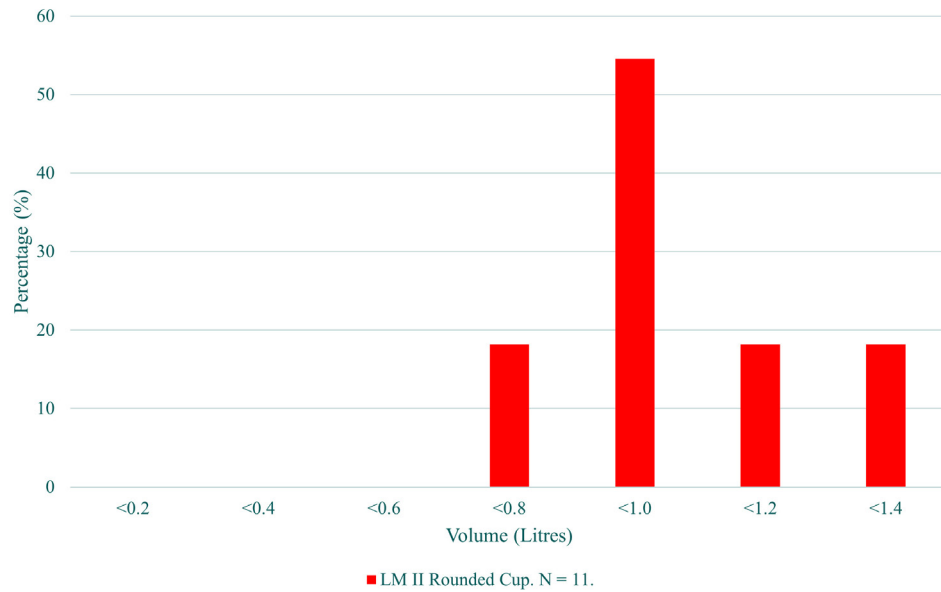


Fig. 6. Volumes of complete published LM II rounded cups from Knossos.

of complete pots (Fig. 6). Adding the MPVs does not particularly change the pattern (Fig. 7). We encounter a number of *lower* volumes, due to the fragmented vessels, however unlike LM IB there is no implication from the minima that there are significant numbers of vessels outside of the range suggested by complete pots. This data implies that in LM II the cup had a much more specific function than it had in LM IB.

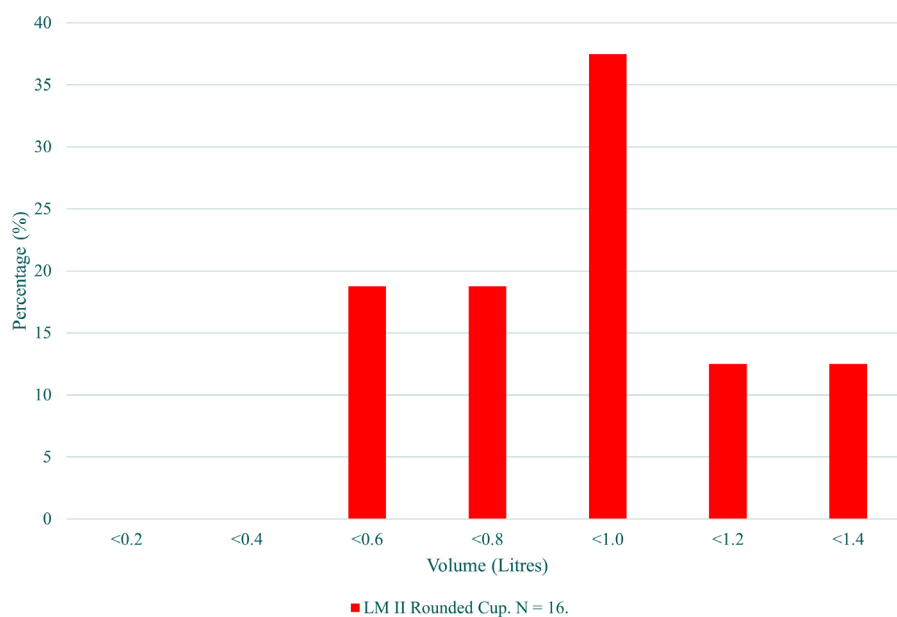


Fig. 7. Volumetric data for complete and fragmentary (MPV) published LM II rounded cups from Knossos.

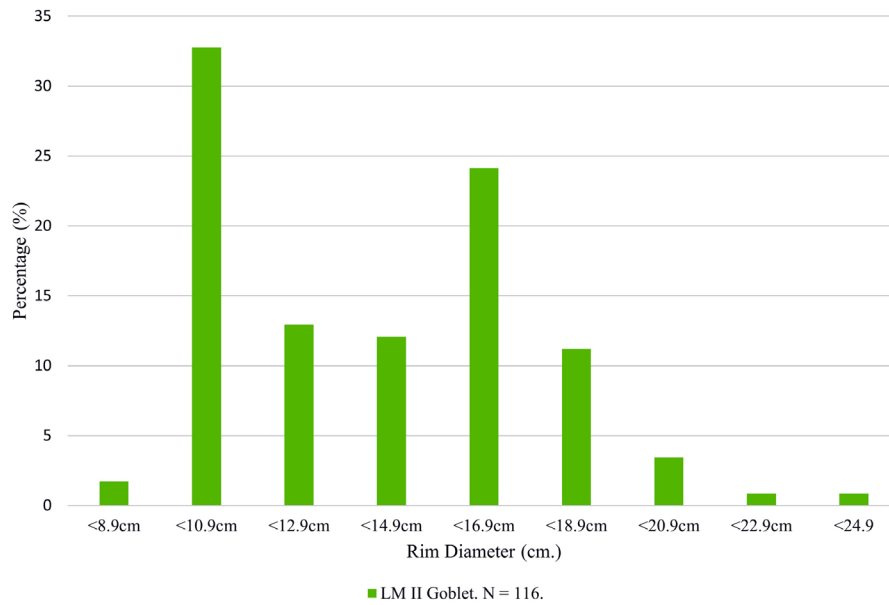


Fig. 8. Rim Diameters of published LM II goblets from Knossos.

Fig. 8 gives the rim diameter range of the goblet, showing a much wider range than the cup. The two size classes are clearly visible in the peaks in the 9-10.9 and 15-16.9 groups. In fact, there seems to be a decline in size between the two around the 13-14.9 cm range, which is both the most popular size group not just of the LM IB cup, but more pertinently, the LM II cup (Fig. 9). It seems that the goblet, while taking on the broader role of the LM IB cup, is manufactured “around” the LM II cup, suggesting discrete functions. This may imply that the specific functions

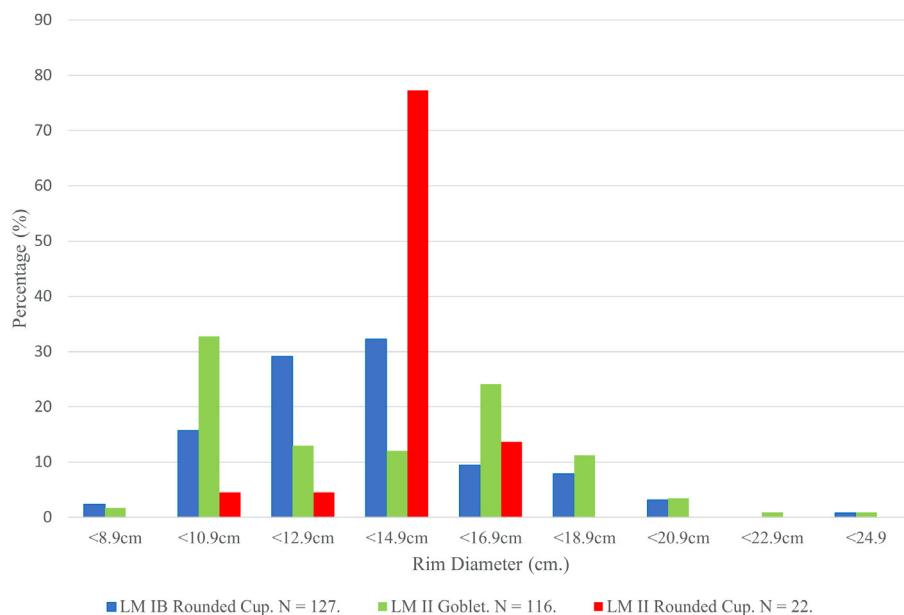


Fig. 9. Comparison of the rim diameters of published LM IB rounded cups, LM II rounded cups and LM II goblets from Knossos.

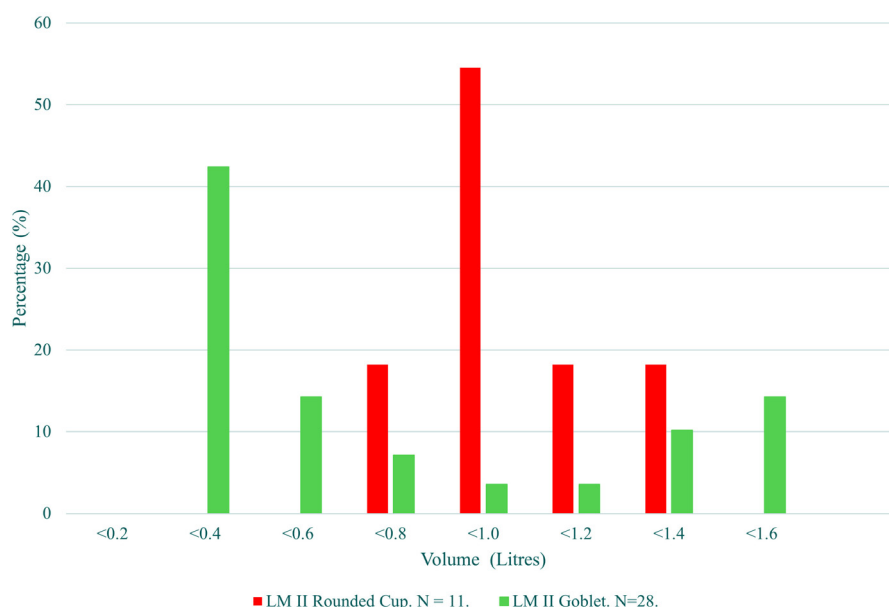


Fig. 10. Volumes of complete published LM II rounded cups and goblets from Knossos.

of the vessel were slightly different from the LM IB cup, given the distinct small size, and its larger peak being larger than the LM IB cup. The relationship between the two LM II shapes can also be seen from the volumetric data from complete (Fig. 10) and incomplete vessels (Fig. 11), where the peak of the small goblet is apparent, while the wider volume range of the large goblet is also visible. Although there is some overlap, it seems clear that the goblet had at least some roles the cup was not used for, and a more diverse range of functions in its larger size, which could be considerably over 1 litre.

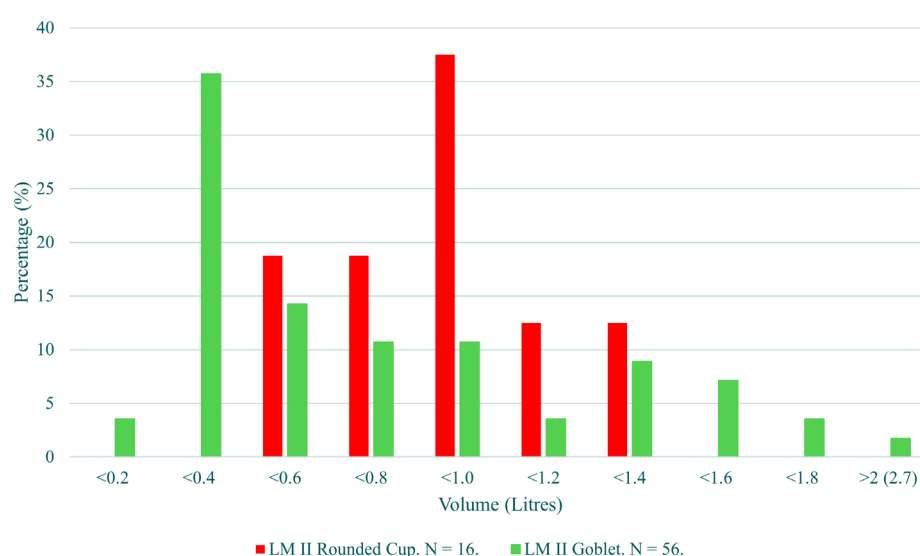


Fig. 11. Volumetric data for complete and fragmentary (MPV) published LM II rounded cups and goblets from Knossos.

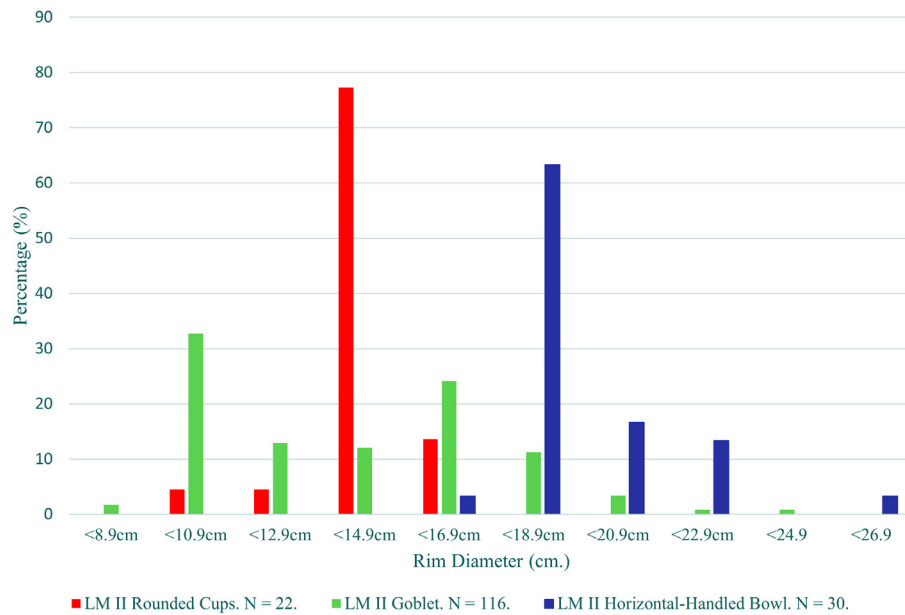


Fig. 12. Rim diameters of Published LM II rounded cups, Goblets and horizontal-handled bowls from Knossos.

The final shape is the horizontal-handled bowl. Fig. 12 shows that its rim diameter range sets it quite apart from the goblet and cup. Despite limited overlap with the larger goblets, the peak size of the bowl is distinct, while its overall range trends larger. The volumetric data is hampered by a dearth of complete pots. Nonetheless, (Fig. 13) also shows that bowls typically have a larger size than the other two shapes. Adding the MPVs, despite one extremely small fragmentary

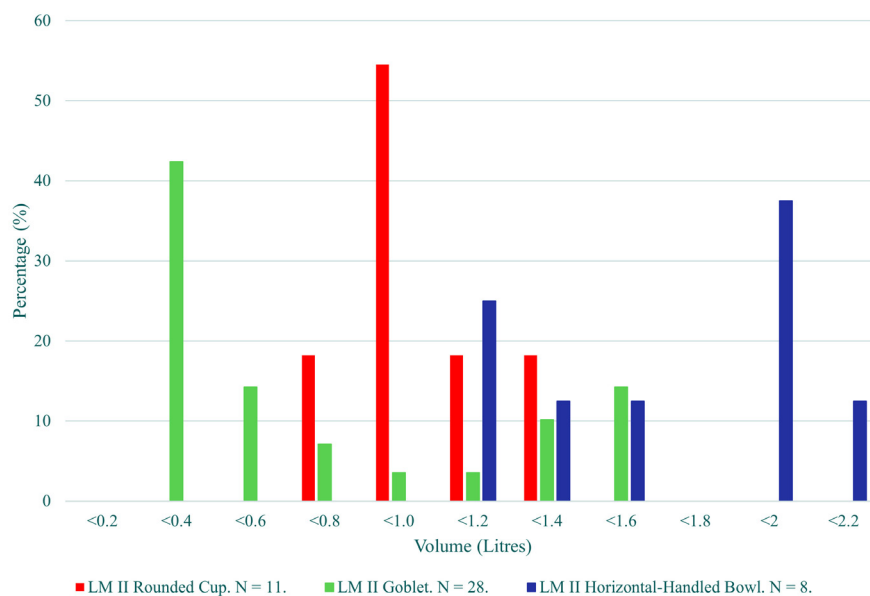


Fig. 13. Volumes of complete published LM II rounded cups, goblets and horizontal-handled bowls from Knossos.

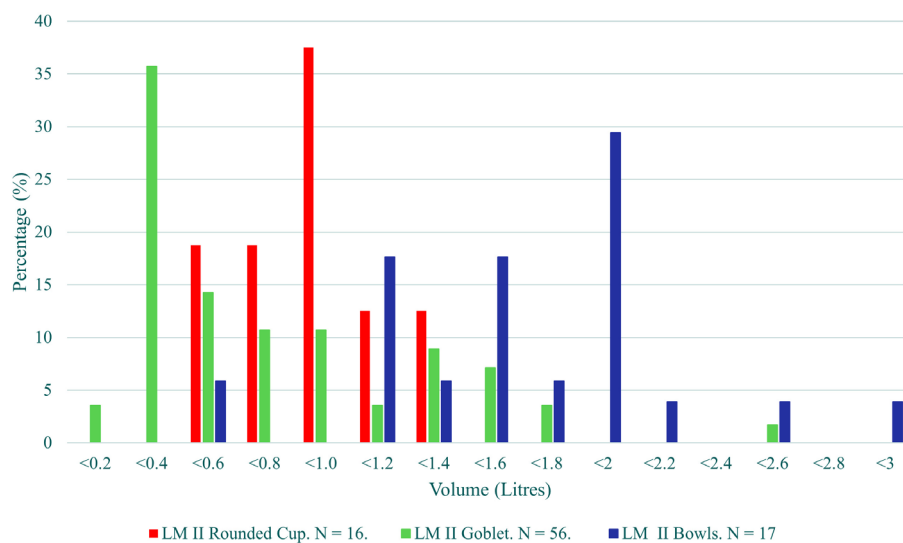


Fig. 14. Volumetric data for complete and fragmentary (MPV) published LM II rounded cups, goblets and horizontal-handled bowls from Knossos.

example, lends further credence to the pattern (Fig. 14) – especially if the overlap between the very largest goblets and bowls may be due to the difficulty in distinguishing the shapes (Rutter 2017, 161-162).

The evidence for the three principal pattern-painted open shapes suggests each occupied a distinct range, being produced with reference to each other to function as a set. Combined with the typological diversity by comparison to LM IB, it seems there was a significant shift in dining practices, and likely etiquette. This need not have reflected a change in cuisine, although it may have, but certainly a change in the manner in which food and drink were served and consumed. Before considering how this set may have functioned, the package is tracked into LM IIIA:1.

LM IIIA:1: ALL CHANGE, AGAIN

The LM II dining set was short-lived, as LM IIIA:1 saw further changes (see Hatzaki 2007, fig. 6.12 for shapes). The horizontal-handled bowl disappeared (Popham 1984, 181), while the goblet was replaced by the decorated kylix, a contrast to the Mainland (French 1964; Mountjoy 1986, 51, 64-65). Moreover, it is *extremely* rare (Popham 1970, 68, 1984, 181). While other rare cups exist (*e.g.*, Popham 1970, fig. 8. 6-9), the rounded cup, with deep Cretan roots, was again predominant (Popham 1969, 301, 1984, 181).

Contrasted with the narrow range of LM II cups, the rim diameter information from the LM IIIA:1 cup (Fig. 15) indicates that its return to popularity produced a wider size range, as in LM IB. Despite this divergence with LM II practice, it should not be assumed this was a simple return to LM IB behaviours. Fig. 16, shows that the diameters of LM IIIA:1 cups trend larger than either LM IB cups or LM II goblets. Volumetrics support this pattern (Fig. 17), although the pattern is most clear in the larger MPV dataset (Fig. 18). Particularly of note is the number of *incomplete* vessels preserving volumes of at least a litre, emphasising the demand for larger vessels. The combined

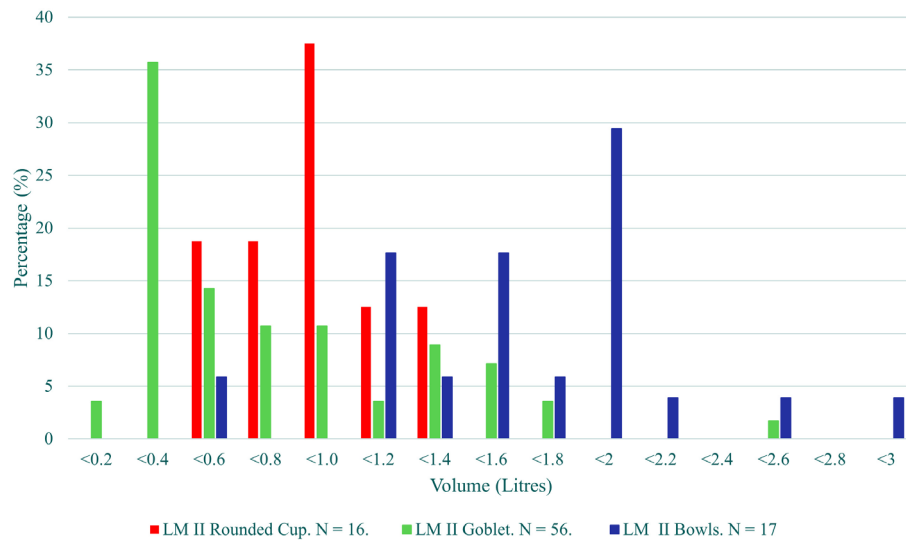


Fig. 15. Rim diameters of published LM IIIA:1 rounded cups from Knossos.

LM IIIA:1 data indicates there was no longer a need for the functions fulfilled by the small goblet, or smaller LM IB cups. The larger sizes also match the demand for larger vessels seen with the LM II large goblet and horizontal-handled bowl, although it does not replicate the bowl's range. Thus the cup regains multifunctionality, but in a changed role from the Neopalatial.

Caution is also needed in emphasising the “Minoanness” of this vessel and the ideas of cultural “tradition”. LM IIIA:1 plain wares display significant Mycenaean influence (Popham et al. 1974;

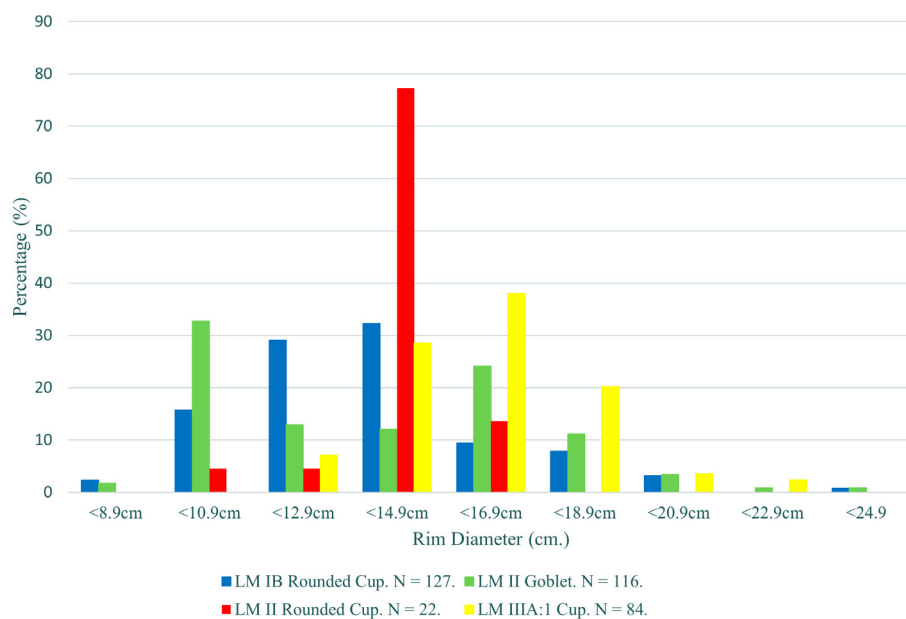


Fig. 16. Comparison of the rim diameters of published LM IB rounded cups, LM II rounded cups, LM II goblets and LM IIIA:1 rounded cups from Knossos.

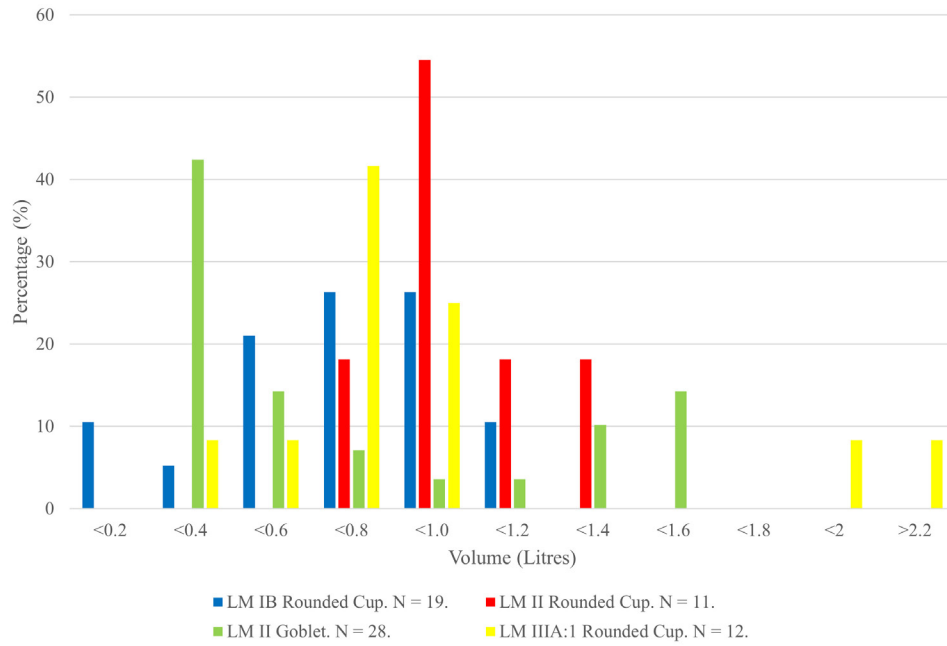


Fig. 17. Volumes of complete published LM IB rounded cups, LM II rounded cups, LM II goblets and LM IIIA:1 rounded cups from Knossos.

Hatzaki 2007, 219-220) It may be, as Popham suggested (1969, 300), that these *plain* Kylikes acted as drinking vessels, while the fancier rounded cups served as food bowls. The presence of elaborately decorated jugs LM IIIA:1 may support this, implying a particular emphasis on

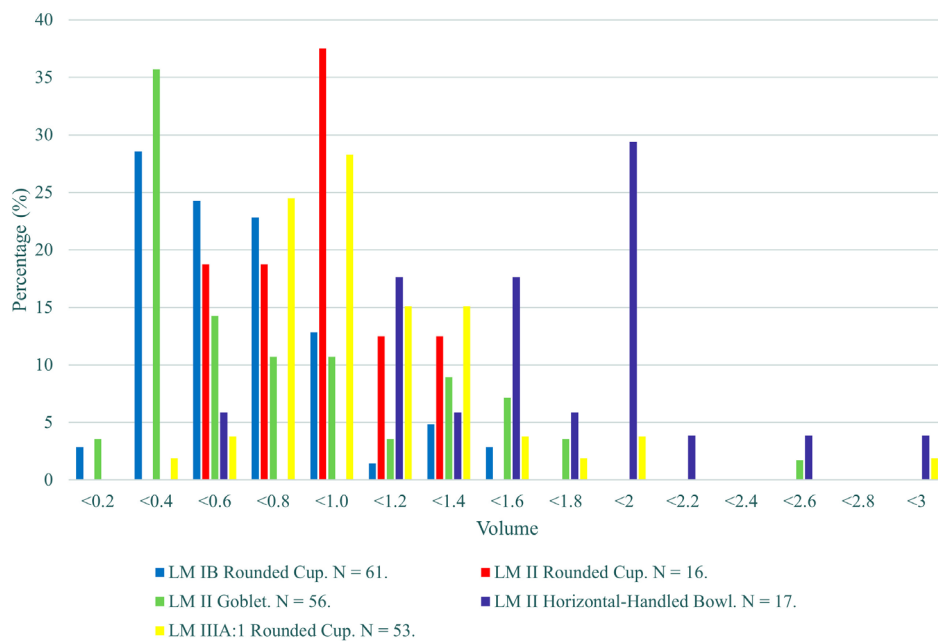


Fig. 18. Volumetric data for complete and fragmentary (MPV) published LM IB rounded cups, LM II rounded cups, LM II goblets, LM II horizontal-handled bowls and LM IIIA:1 rounded cups from Knossos.

host-guest relationships (see Day and Wilson 2004 for a similar in EM II). The tangled relationship between a stylistically Minoan dominant decorated assemblage and a Mycenaeanised plainware assemblage is one that would reward further research. Not so much a situation of Mycenaeanisation, but perhaps Cretan hybridisation?

LM II ETIQUETTE: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

Although it was short-lived, comparison of LM II to LM IB and LM IIIA:1 strongly suggests a functional dining set. Each of the LM II shapes had a discrete size, complementary to the others. The cup and bowl are clearly different, but the two goblet sizes are best viewed as separate shapes. Seeing this suite of shapes as a package of four, rather than three, (Fig. 19) offers a tentative approach to reconstructing their combined function. The small goblet, with a volume of c.250 ml was an individual drinking vessel. The cup, with a volume c.1 L represents a medium food service bowl for soups, stews or broths (Isaakidou 2016, 12-14). Turning to the larger vessels, a few possibilities arise. The large goblet, with volumes well over a litre, could have served as a communal drinking vessel, a larger food service bowl, or a proto-krater. The horizontal-handled bowl, with its capacities sometimes exceeding 2-3 L was a communal food bowl.

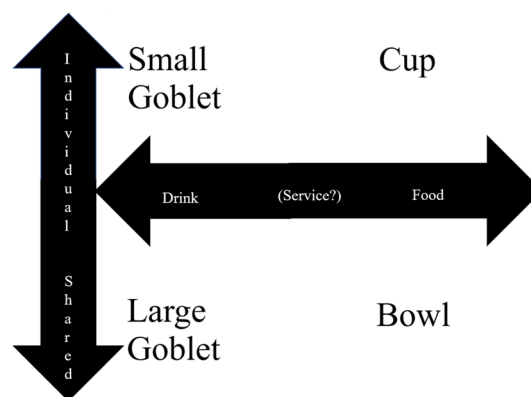


Fig. 19. Possible interpretive scheme for proposed LM II pattern-painted open shape tableware dining set at Knossos.

Although caution is required in interpretation, there may be two sets of functionally equivalent, but metrically distinct pots, an interplay between individual and communal consumption. This raises the possibility that LM II consumption events using decorated pottery may have had a socially diacritical or hierarchical element. In LM IB individuals used predominantly one kind of decorated open vessel, which was decoratively individualised (Hood 2011, 174, figs. 17-21). In LM II this changes to a different etiquette, foregrounding new drinking vessels of foreign origin, is more obviously hierarchical, and may reflect wider social changes in society.

Hatzaki (2018, cf. Letesson and Driessen 2018) argued that the transition between LM IB and LM IIIA should be seen in terms of an internal shift from horizontal, corporate structures to the more hierarchical structures implied by the Linear B records of the Knossian State (Driessen and

Mouthuy 2022). Some reflection of the intense local competition that would have ensued with such a change is reflected in a short-lived, diacritical etiquette in LM II, before the emergence of a new *status quo* in LM IIIA:1.

Relevant to this wider argument is that the LM II assemblage is distinct from contemporary Mainland dining practices. At LH IIB sites like Asine (Frizell 1980) or Tsoungiza (Rutter 2020) the assemblage was dominated by goblets to a much greater extent. Vapheio cups, defunct on Crete, remained a popular LH IIB drinking shape (Mountjoy 1986, 45-46), while neither the rounded cup or horizontal-handled bowl occurred. Although the goblet was shared between both regions, at Knossos it does not represent a wholesale importation of foreign dining practices (French 1997, 151), but rather is grafted onto a decorated assemblage that continues from LM I (D'Agata and Girella 2022, 24-25), part of the active construction of a new set of socially appropriate behaviours. If kylix-based dining practices were as significant in Mycenaean culture as has been argued (Wright 2004b) it seems surprising that we do not find a deeper rooted change in the “fancy” pottery had there been a significant population or externally imposed culture change. As Preston argued for mortuary change, we should look for explanation at the internal, local level rather than from across the Aegean, a point emphasised by the fact that both stylistic and morphological changes looking towards LM II are already visible in LM IB, meaning this was not a sudden imposition (Rutter 2017, 140-141; Hallager 2022, 216).

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

This paper sought to demonstrate that close attention to metrical and volumetric patterns can reveal changing etiquette. Examining the most common pattern-painted open shapes between LM IB and LM IIIA:1 shows that the dining practices of LM II are distinctive. Attempting to interpret this leads to broader questions of the changing Knossian social structures, and its relations with the Mainland, opening several avenues for further research.

Further investigation must include unpainted and monochrome pottery, since there are intriguing cultural dimensions in unpicking the relationships between the distinct typological ranges preserved in each ware. Ideally, more data is needed. Relying on published data means that many of the samples available are quite small. Further measurements of unpublished bulk data will help to confirm or deny the impressions presented here. In addition, the data from each individual subsite should be de-aggregated to see if any meaningful inter or intra-contextual patterning appears. Finally, the extent to which these patterns can be found outside Knossos should be explored. LM II has a notoriously restricted range outside Knossos, with only sites like Kommos and Chania presenting pure deposits. At Kommos, Rutter (2017, 155) notes that it is the cup rather than the goblet that was the most popular shape, suggesting a selective uptake of the new, Knossos-inspired behaviours, or else that this etiquette was too short-lived to take root elsewhere, before the longer-lived, also Knossian LM IIIA:1 style was in vogue (Driessen and Langohr 2007; D'Agata and Girella 2022). Close comparison along the lines conducted here between The Unexplored Mansion and House X at Kommos in particular would be fruitful (cf. D'Agata and Girella 2022, figs. 3-4).

These points notwithstanding, the foregoing analysis offers an insight into the rapidly changing world of LM II-III Crete. Despite the relatively lowly status of tableware, close analysis of the table helps to shed a light on a period in which new power groups sought to construct new sociopolitical structures to come to terms with, and move on from, the collapse of the Neopalatial social environment.

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