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**TEXNH**  
**CRAFTSMEN, CRAFTSWOMEN**  
**AND CRAFTSMANSHIP**  
**IN THE AEGEAN BRONZE AGE**

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**II**

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## WORKSHOP ATTRIBUTIONS FOR SOME LATE MINOAN III EAST CRETAN LARNAKES \*

The tholos tomb at Achladia in the Siteia District, excavated by Nicolaos Platon in 1939 and 1952, and published recently by the authors contained three larnakes and 12 vessels, unfortunately lost during the war. However, information contained in the excavation notebook and Platon's sketches for two of the larnakes, have allowed us to trace parallels and to propose a chronological attribution.<sup>1</sup>

The Achladia larnakes were chest-shaped; for one of them the gabled lid with a bull's head and tail in relief was preserved. The closest parallels for the larnakes are concentrated in the Siteia region. In particular we know of two examples from Petras, one from Kimouriotis and a fourth, now in Zurich, from an unknown location. Affinities go beyond a general similarity in type and decoration to include many technical and typological details, painted patterns, plastic additions, decorative composition and, possibly, funerary symbols. Therefore, we have enlarged the enquiry, in order to define whether they could be attributed to the same workshop.<sup>2</sup>

The main decorative patterns are octopi and horns of consecration combined with double axes; accessory motifs include spirals in various combinations, leaf-shaped elements, zig-zags and X-patterns. The organization of the motifs, alternating pictorial and schematic patterns is consistent, offering a highly symmetric result and expressing a *horror vacui*. The space, limited by vertical frames, is decorated with schematic elements, while the favoured pictorial motif - the octopus - is stylized, painted in solid black and forms a partition between the wavy tentacles.

One of the larnakes from Petras, found in fragmentary condition, in secondary use, on an early LM IIIB floor, gives a *terminus ante quem* for the dating and matches with the analysis of the Achladia pottery, datable mostly in LM IIIA.2-early B, and provides a chronological framework for the whole group.<sup>3</sup>

The examination of the motifs and their arrangement suggest that a tub-shaped larnax found somewhere around the town of Siteia, whose main decoration on each side is a stylized octopus with six tentacles can be related to the same workshop (Pl. CLXXXb); the decoration on the curved sides consists of series of framed running spirals. Typological and stylistic analysis of the group has prompted some reflections about the identifications of workshops producing larnakes, their relationship to the pottery production, and the mode of distribution of the finished products (Pl. CLXXXa).

\* Acknowledgements: The authors wish to thank most warmly Dr Michael Wedde for reading and correcting the English text and for several useful suggestions. The pencil drawings of the larnakes are by Ms Claudia Fugalli and were inked by Mr Antonio Mancini to whom also the map in Pl. CLXXXa is due. Photographs of the larnakes in the Ayios Nicolaos and Siteia Museums are by Metaxia Tsipopoulou. Photographs of the Geneva larnax were provided by the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire photographic archive. Mr Mario Petrarca helped with photograph printing.

1 M. TSIPOPOULOU and L. VAGNETTI, *Achladia. Scavi e ricerche della Missione Greco-Italiana in Creta Orientale (1991-1993)* (Incunabula Graeca XCVII 1995) 115-128, fig. 88.

2 TSIPOPOULOU and VAGNETTI (*supra* n. 1) 131-145.

3 TSIPOPOULOU and VAGNETTI (*supra* n. 1) 138, fig. 102; M. TSIPOPOULOU, "Late Minoan III reoccupation in the area of the palatial building at Petras, Siteia", in E. HALLAGER and B. PÁLSSON-HALLAGER (eds.), *Late Minoan III Pottery. Chronology and Terminology* (in press).

Beyond the Siteia area, to the west, similar combinations of shape and decoration can be found on some larnakes from the Isthmus of Ierapetra, Pacheia Ammos, Episkopi, and Kavousi.<sup>4</sup> The similarity between the Siteia and the Ierapetra larnakes is too close to be accidental, and goes far beyond the mere adoption of the octopus as a decorative motif, carrying a special symbolic meaning connected to death, as many scholars have already stressed.<sup>5</sup> To our eyes the combination of the bath-tub shape and the placement of the octopus, not in panels, but covering most of the body of the vessel, with a bilateral symmetry, where the body of the animal partitions the space, with the tentacles becoming a filling motif, indicates a special "style", that seems to be well at home in Eastern Crete. The subject can be investigated to a deeper and wider extent, through the study of other groups of east cretan larnakes, in which the same tradition is further elaborated.

A third group consists of three bath-tub larnakes from Petras, (Pl. CLXXXI, CLXXXIIIa) Tourtoulou-Aghios Georgios (Pl. CLXXXIIIb, CLXXXVa-b), and Piskokephalo (Pl. CLXXXII), decorated with octopi and fishes assigned by Athanassia Kanta to the same craftsman.<sup>6</sup> To them we can now add a larnax of unknown provenance exhibited in the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire of Geneva (Pl. CLXXXIV).<sup>7</sup> The formal comparison among members of this group, reveals similarities, both for shape and decoration. The bath-tub in all cases has a slightly everted profile and a thick horizontal rim with a ridge underneath and a torus base. The four horizontal handles have two circular depressions at the lower attachments. The decoration is organized in exactly the same way: the larnakes from Petras, Tourtoulou and Geneva have in the middle of each long side, under the handle, the head of an octopus, set vertically, and dividing the available space in two equal halves, each containing two rows of tentacles. The octopus on the specimen from Piskokephalo is more schematically rendered, only through two wavy lines, surrounding the whole surface of the vessel. The interiors are decorated with fishes and wavy lines, the latter alluding to sea-waves.<sup>8</sup> The Petras, Tourtoulou, and Piskokephalo examples have a fish on each long side, separated by rock patterns with multiple contours, derived from Neopalatial Marine Style decorative motifs.<sup>9</sup> The Geneva larnax presents a more complex decorative scheme: there are four fishes, disposed below a monochrome wavy pattern with multiple contours. This gives a more naturalistic representation of the marine environment and sea creatures. The bottom surface bears thick wavy lines set horizontally in the Petras larnax, while the Piskokephalo, the Tourtoulou, and the Geneva examples are decorated with multiple intersecting wavy lines and scattered dots, the latter representing either waves or seaweeds.<sup>10</sup> Rims are decorated with two wavy lines, one on the upper and the second on the vertical surface respectively. Handles bear vertical strokes in three cases, while the Geneva example has horizontal strokes.

Octopi are very schematically rendered: two large eyes, represented as concentric circles with a large solid inner dot, form the focal point of the motif, while the rest of the body is symmetrical, rendered by two similar drop-shaped elements with multiple contours: A short

4 A. KANTA, *The Late Minoan III Period in Crete. A Survey of Sites, Pottery, and their Distribution* (1980) figs 55:9 and 56:2 (from Pacheia Ammos); 63:6 (from Episkopi Ierapetra) with further bibliography. A fragment from a similar larnax was found at Kavousi-Kastro in secondary use (W. Coulson, personal communication).

5 R. LAFFINEUR, *La mer et l'au-delà dans l'Égée préhistorique*, in R. LAFFINEUR and L. BASCH (ed.), *Thalassa. L'Égée préhistorique et la mer. Actes de la troisième Rencontre égéenne internationale de l'Université de Liège, Station de recherches sous-marines et océanographiques (StaReSO), Calvi, Corse (23-25 avril 1990)*, *Aegaeum* 7 (1991) 231-237; L.V. WATROUS, "The Origin and Iconography of the Late Minoan painted Larnax," *Hesperia* 60 (1991) 285-307; N. MARINATOS, *Minoan Religion, Ritual Image and Symbol* (1993) 231-232.

6 KANTA (*supra* n. 4) 292, figs. 65:3-4 (Aghios Georgios - Tourtoulou), 66:1-2 (Piskokephalo), 73:9-10 (Petras - Papoura). The latter specimen has been erroneously attributed to Praesos.

7 Y. MOTTIER, "Ein minoischer Wannensarkophag im Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Genève," *AK* 25 (1982) 74-76.

8 The tradition of painting fishes in the inner part of bath-tub larnakes is known as early as LMIIIA; a good example comes from Milatos (KANTA, *supra* n. 4 fig. 52:5) and a fragmentary one has been recently identified from Knossos, C. MORRIS, "Fishy Tales from Knossos: a Minoan Larnax and Vase-Painter," in C. MORRIS (ed.), *Klados. Essays in Honour of J.N. Coldstream* (1995) 185-193. Also one of the larnakes from Pacheia Ammos bears a similar motif (KANTA, *supra* n. 4).

9 For the wavy border motif, WATROUS (*supra* n. 5) 290.

10 WATROUS (*supra* n. 5) 289.

tentacle, again with multiple contours and fringes on the upper side, starts from either side of the head ending in spirals. On the Geneva larnax additional spirals are set near the handle and on either side of the body. Two rows of wavy lines fill the remaining space, starting, the upper one from the tentacles, and the lower from the head, as mere conventions, meant to suggest the multiple tentacles that an octopus has in reality. It is interesting to trace the change from naturalistic representations, as are known in the Marine Style, through different degrees of abstraction.<sup>11</sup> The products of the Petras-Achladia workshop, the first group mentioned here, still preserve some connection with the physical reality of the animal, which, although schematized is equipped with the proper number of tentacles. The ultimate step towards abstraction is reached in the Piskokephalo larnax, of the Petras-Piskokephalo group, where the body of the creature disappears leaving only two wavy lines surrounding the vessel.

In contrast to the octopi, fishes, probably identifiable as mackerels,<sup>12</sup> are more naturalistically drawn, both in the details and their arrangement on the surface, and offer the vivid impression of swimming creatures (Pl. CLXXXIb, CLXXXIb, CLXXXIVb, CLXXXVb). The arched body with four groups of fins, symmetrically set near the head and the tail, is filled with horizontal wavy lines, starting from the eye and converging towards the V-shaped tail; the number of the lines varies between six in the Petras larnax (Pl. CLXXXIb), to three in the Piskokephalo example (Pl. CLXXXIb). The head is triangular and sharp teeth appear inside the open mouth. Eyes are represented as concentric circles with an inner solid dot, exactly as on the octopi. The Piskokephalo fishes have a more elongated body, no teeth, and the eye reduced to a solid dot. Fishes on the interior of the Geneva larnax, although undoubtedly very close to the already described examples, display some differences, in the number of fins, six in this case, the very thick contour of the body, and the more stylized appearance (Pl. CLXXXIVb). Concerning the painting of the inner part, most likely the vessel was put upside down and the decoration was added starting from the rim towards the bottom. This explains why the rock and wavy patterns are also inverted.

Detailed comparison of the four specimens strongly suggests that they not only belong to the same fairly homogeneous group, but are also the work of a single craftsman. Furthermore, we should point out that the most successful instance of his work is the Geneva larnax, where the simplified representation of the fishes combined with the wavy border above them offers a better insertion into the available space. To the same person can be attributed a stirrup jar found in Ialysos, on Rhodes, Tomb 15/2 (Pl. CLXXXIVc). The octopus decoration of this vase is strikingly close, in general, and to the smallest details, to that on the Geneva larnax. The vase testifies both to the level of permanent organization and to the wide range of products of the Siteia workshop. Its export to Rhodes, together with other east cretan octopus stirrup jars, may have influenced the formation of the Dodecanesian "octopus style."<sup>13</sup>

In 1993, one of the authors (M.T.) excavated a chamber tomb at Kritsa, in the hinterland of the gulf of Mirabello, which contained two bath-tub larnakes decorated with stylized octopi and fishes (Pl. CLXXXVI). They show affinities to the other examples known from the Siteia

11 L. ROCCHETTI, "Un motivo decorativo vascolare in Grecia fra la fine dell'Età del Bronzo e l'inizio dell'Età del Ferro," in D. MUSTI *et al.* (eds.), *La transizione dal Miceneo all'Alto Arcaismo. Dal palazzo alla città. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma 1988* (1991) 97-116.

12 M.A.V. GILL, "Some observations on representations of marine animals in Minoan art, and their identification," in P. DARQUE and J.C. POURSAT (eds.), *L'iconographie minoenne. Actes de la Table Ronde d'Athènes (21-22 avril 1983)*, BCH Suppl. XI (1985) 65.

13 M. BENZI, *Rodi e la civiltà micenea* (1992) 87, pl. 15:c, see also KANTA (*supra* n. 4), 305. The close connection between larnakes and vessel production has been recognized long ago. B. RUTKOWSKI, *Larnasky Egeiskie* (1966) 133-134; WATROUS (*supra* n. 5) 303. For a more general approach to attribution studies in the Bronze Age Aegean see also C. MORRIS, "Hands up for the individual! The role of attribution studies in Aegean Prehistory," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 3, 41-66. An important recent contribution is the study of a similar case by C. MORRIS (*supra* n. 8). Morris in her article defines the personality of a craftsman who painted larnakes and vessels at Knossos in LM IIIA, whose products were appreciated also outside Crete (in Attica). The simultaneous publication of Morris' paper and our previous study on the Petras-Achladia group of larnakes (*supra* n. 1) outlines a converging interest towards the definition of workshops and craftsmen, the organization of pottery production, interrelations between production centres and also between individual 'artists'.

region examined above, yet they are different from each other in shape: larnax A is similar to the Petras-Piskokephalo group examples, while larnax B has a more convex body profile, and a more pronounced rim. Both have four horizontal handles, without thumb impressions underneath, decorated with vertical strokes. The organization of the decoration is very similar to that of the previous group, but larnax A, closer to the Siteia examples as far as the outside decoration is concerned, differs in several details of the inner part: The space among the fishes is filled with octopus tentacles; the body of the fish has vertical wavy lines; the eye is reduced to a solid dot; mouth and teeth are very close to the already described examples (Pl. CLXXXVc). Larnax B, instead of two series of wavy lines, displays three, and the style of the painting is careless (Pl. CLXXXVib-c). The interior decoration shows the strongest difference, despite the same subject: four fishes in this case, and an aquatic bird between the second and the third; the head of the second fish lies below the tail of the first, showing a limited perception of the available space; (Pl. CLXXXVIIa-b) the fishes differ radically from those of the Petras-Piskokephalo group as well as from those of larnax A, in their bird-like heads and their highly unrealistic and lifeless bodies; two of them have a "figure-of-eight" body. Some filling spiral-like motifs occupy the upper part of the vessel.

From the above observations some suggestions can be made regarding the four groups identified here:

1. The two groups - Petras-Piskokephalo and Kritsa - are strongly related, the second being a derivative of the first.<sup>14</sup> Whether this implies a potter who learned his craft at Siteia, moved to the Mirabello area, practicing there, either temporarily or permanently, or a local craftsman who tried to imitate the products of a Siteian potter at Mirabello, is not easy to decide, for lack of evidence.
2. The two Kritsa larnakes are by two different hands and the craftsmanship of potter B, who apparently was more familiar with bird representations, is of inferior quality, especially in the execution of curved lines, as the tentacles and the fish contours indicate.
3. Pending archaeometric analyses, remarks concerning the clay are macroscopic, yet based on the long acquaintance of one of the authors with the local minoan fabrics of Eastern Crete:
  - a. The two Kritsa larnakes are made of the same clay, despite the involvement of two different craftsmen.
  - b. In the Siteia group, one potter made all four larnakes, using the same clay.<sup>15</sup>
4. The chronological setting of the larnakes from Kritsa, thanks to the evidence of the accompanying pottery, lies within the early phase of LM IIIC, thus confirming a chronology in early IIIC also for the Petras-Piskokephalo group, as Kanta has already suggested.

In addition to the above groups, a further two larnakes, exhibited in the Siteia Museum, whose exact provenance is unknown, but undoubtedly found in the surrounding area, display several analogies with the items already discussed: both are bath-tubs, with slightly everted sides, four horizontal handles and thick rims. One of them is decorated with debased octopi: (Pl. CLXXXVIIc-d) the bodies of the animals are lozenge-shaped, with big concentric circles indicating the eyes, set outside the body, and fringed tentacles hanging from either side. Four rows of wavy lines, deprived of any link with the octopus, fill the rest of the surface, while the interior is left unpainted. The external surface of the other larnax is divided irregularly in panels, the largest, occupying half of the body, contains a broad wavy line with double contours, and complementary double spirals, reminiscing of the standard octopus decoration (Pl. CLXXXVIIIa-e). The inside bears six schematic animal figures, probably sea-turtles. The drawing is careless and the organization of the motifs not successful (Pl. CLXXXVIIId-e).

<sup>14</sup> On the map (Pl. CLXXXa) the two groups are indicated with the same symbol.

<sup>15</sup> The Geneva larnax, however, has not been examined personally by the authors.



Scholars dealing with larnakes have discussed the problem of items attributed to the same workshop, if not to a single hand, found at considerable distance from each other. The commonest interpretation, considering also ethnographic parallels<sup>16</sup> and the difficulty in transport of such cumbersome artifacts, especially in a rugged area, is to argue for itinerant potters working at different places with local clays and producing on the spot what was in demand.<sup>17</sup> The products both of the earlier and the later workshop recognised in the Siteia area (Petras-Achladia and Petras-Piskokephalo) however, are made of one clay and their distribution covers distances between two and ten kms, that can easily be overcome through transport by animal.<sup>18</sup>

The presence of two different potters at Kritsa, both working with local clay, and undoubtedly influenced by the Petras tradition, even though none can be identified with the person who produced the Petras-Piskokephalo larnakes, needs an explanation. Various hypotheses can be proposed:

1. Both the Kritsa potters could have been trained in the Petras workshop and worked at Kritsa, either as itinerants or permanent residents.
2. The painter of Kritsa larnax A was trained at Petras, and that of larnax B learned from him.
3. The possibility of local potters collaborating with itinerant painters has never been discussed, to our knowledge, but it should not be argued without some supporting evidence.

Further stylistic examination with particular reference to ceramic data, and indispensable archaeometric analysis should provide means towards a greater understanding of local workshop activities, their organization, their interconnections and thus the circulation of people and goods, and the transmission of specialized knowledge.

Metaxia TSIPOPOULOU  
Lucia VAGNETTI

16 M. VOYATZOGLOU, "Thrapsano, village of jar makers," in P.P. BETANCOURT (ed.), *East Cretan White-on-Dark Ware. Studies on a Handmade Pottery of the Early to Middle Minoan Periods* (1984) 126-142; H. BLITZER, "Traditional pottery production in Kentri, Crete: workshops, materials, techniques and trade," *ibid.* 143-154.

17 RUTKOWSKI (*supra* n. 13) 132; KANTA (*supra* n. 4) 290-293.

18 According to Cretan villagers a donkey can easily carry a load of 50 kgs on each side.

## CATALOGUE

**Petras-Piskokephalo group**

1. Ayios Nicolaos Museum 262 (Pl. CLXXXI; CLXXXIIIa).  
Provenance: Petras, Papoura.  
Height: 0.47 m. Length: (rim) 1 m. (base) 0.8 m. Width: 0.6 m. Thickness of rim: 0.046 m.  
Orange medium clay with many inclusions. Orange-yellowish slip. Dark brown paint.
2. Ayios Nicolaos Museum 1858 (Pl. CLXXXIIIb; CLXXXVa-b).  
Provenance: Ayios Georghios-Tourtouloi.  
Height: 0.48 m. Length: (rim) 1.207 m. (base) 1.034 m.  
Brown-orange medium clay with many inclusions. Orange slip. Dark brown to reddish paint.
3. Siteia Museum, unnumbered (Pl. CLXXXII).  
Provenance: Piskokephalo.  
Height: 0.43 m. Length: (rim) 1.125 m. (base) 0.97 m. Width: 0.56 m. Thickness of rim: 0.05 m.  
Brown-orange medium clay with many inclusions. Orange slip. Reddish paint.
4. Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva 23436 (Pl. CLXXXIVa-b).  
Provenance unknown.  
Height: 0.60 m. Length: (rim) 1.20 m. (base) 0.90 m. Width: 0.66 m.  
Brown-reddish medium clay with sandy inclusions, yellowish slip, dark brown to reddish paint.

**Kritsa group**

5. Ayios Nicolaos Museum 12600 (Pl. CLXXXVc; CLXXXVIa).  
Provenance: Kritsa Chamber tomb 1993 Larnax A.  
Height: 0.46 m. Length: (rim) 1.17 m. (base) 0.92 m. Width: 0.62 m. Thickness of rim: 0.038 m.  
Orange-brown medium clay with inclusions, buff slip, dark brown to reddish paint.
6. Ayios Nicolaos Museum 12601 (Pl. CLXXXVIIb-c; CLXXXVIIa-b).  
Provenance: Kritsa Chamber tomb 1993 Larnax B.  
Height: 0.44 m. Length: (rim) 1.23 m. (base) 0.88 m. Width: 0.61 m. Thickness of rim: 0.055 m.  
Buff coarse clay, buff-orange slip, dark brown to reddish paint.

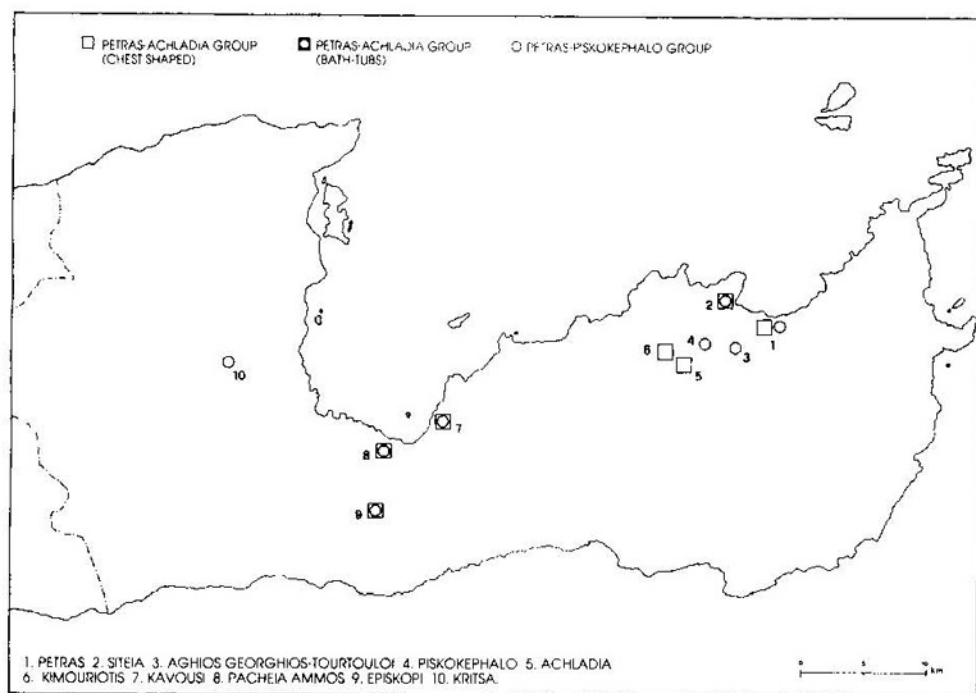
**Related specimens**

7. Siteia Museum 6883 (Pl. CLXXXVIIc-d).  
Provenance unknown.  
Height: 0.46 m. Length: (rim) 1.28 m. (base) 0.99 m. Width: 0.60 m. Thickness of rim: 0.06 m.  
Orange buff medium clay, buff slip, brown to orange paint.
8. Siteia Museum, unnumbered (Pl. CLXXXVIIIa-e).  
Provenance unknown.  
Height: 0.48 m. Length: (rim) 1.06 m. (base) 0.84 m. Width: 0.52 m. Thickness of rim: 0.06 m.  
Buff medium clay with many inclusions, buff slip, black paint.

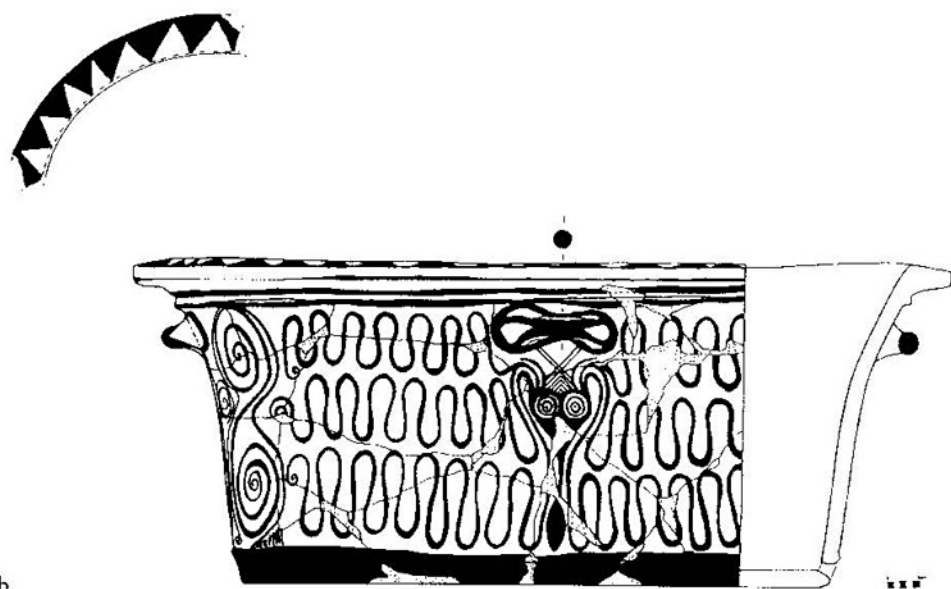
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Pl. CLXXXa Distribution map of the larnakes discussed in the paper.  
 Pl. CLXXXb Larnax from the surroundings of the town of Siteia (Siteia Museum 6809).  
 Pl. CLXXXI Larnax from Petras (Aghios Nicolaos Museum 262).  
 Pl. CLXXXII Larnax from Piskokephalo (Siteia Museum, unnumbered).  
 Pl. CLXXXIIa Larnax from Petras (Aghios Nicolaos Museum 262).  
 Pl. CLXXXIIb Larnax from Aghios Georghios-Tourtouloi (Aghios Nicolaos Museum 1858).  
 Pl. CLXXXIVa-b Larnax of unknown provenance (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva 23436).  
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 Pl. CLXXXVIIa-b Inside decoration of larnax A from Kritsa (Aghios Nicolaos Museum 12600).  
 Pl. CLXXXVIIc-d Larnax of unknown provenance (Siteia Museum 6883).  
 Pl. CLXXXVIII Larnax of unknown provenance (Siteia Museum unnumbered).

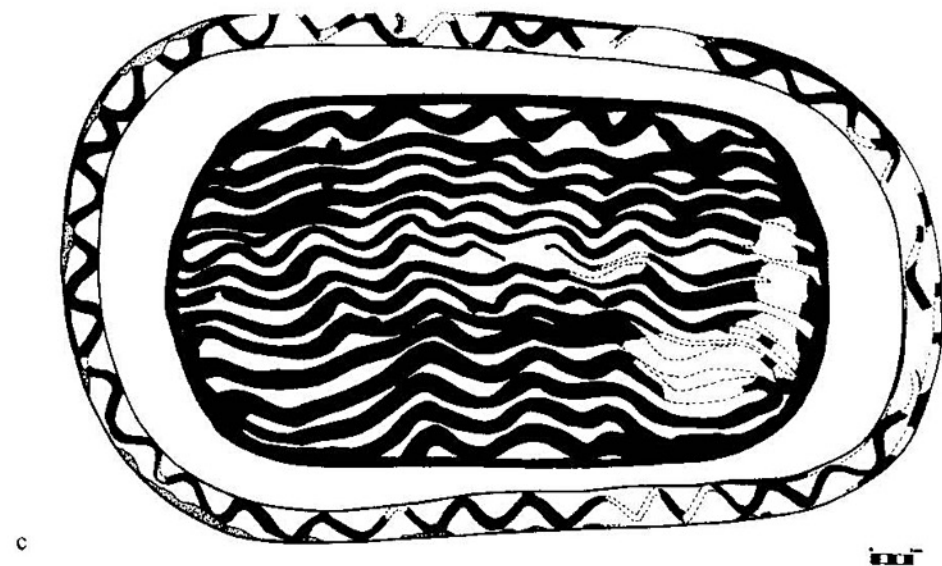
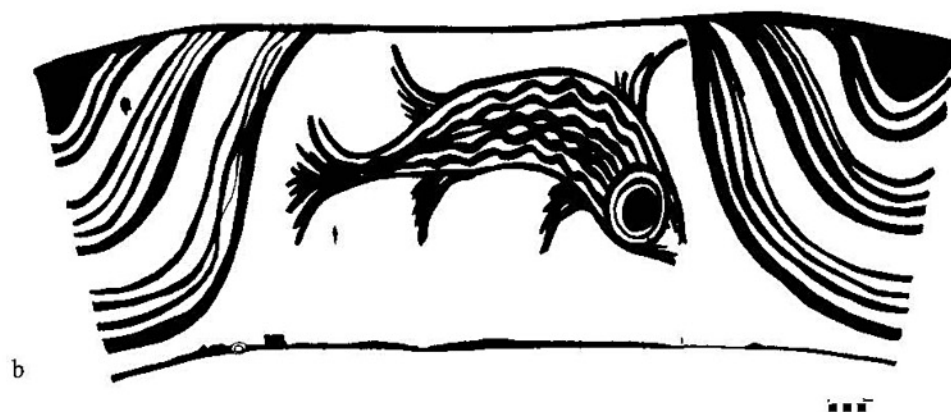
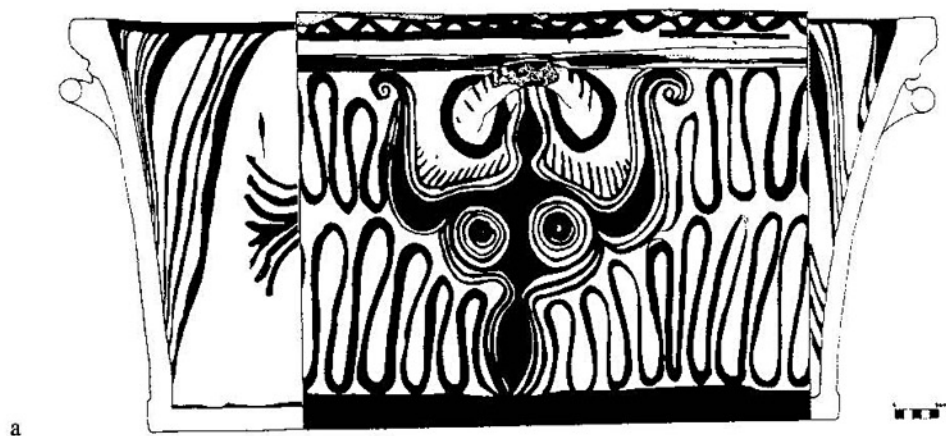


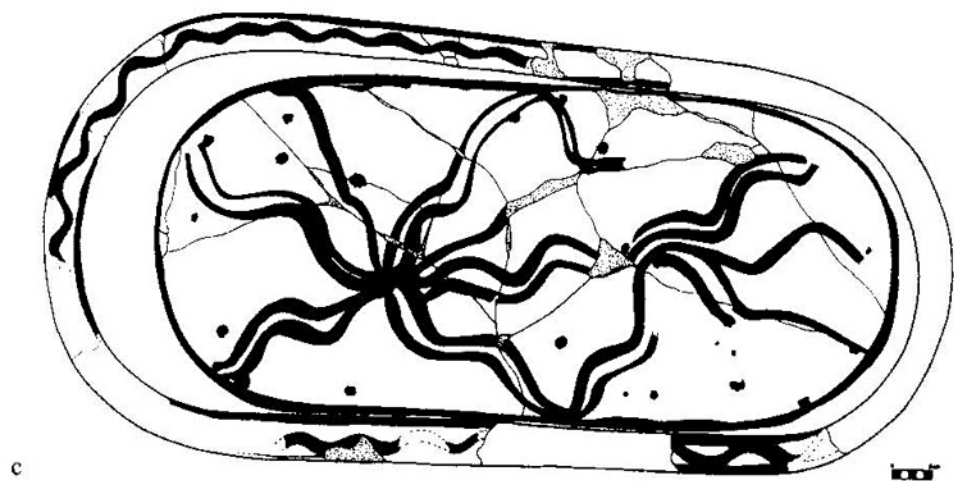
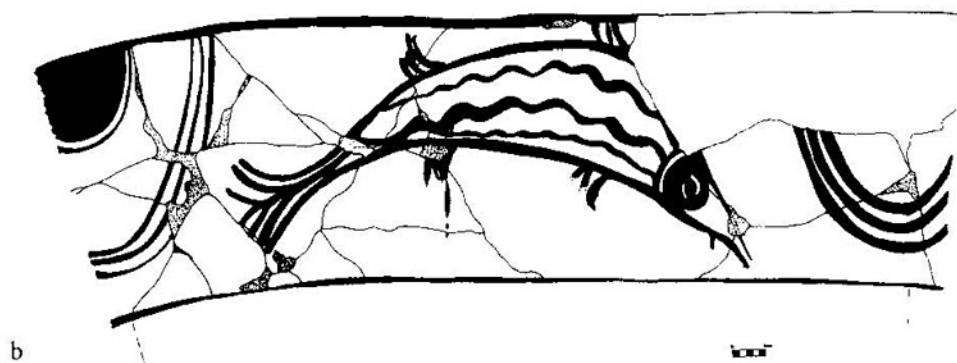
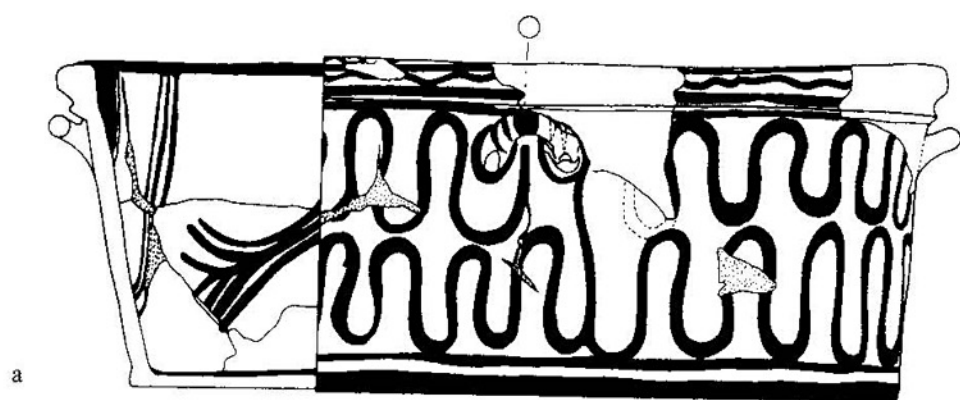


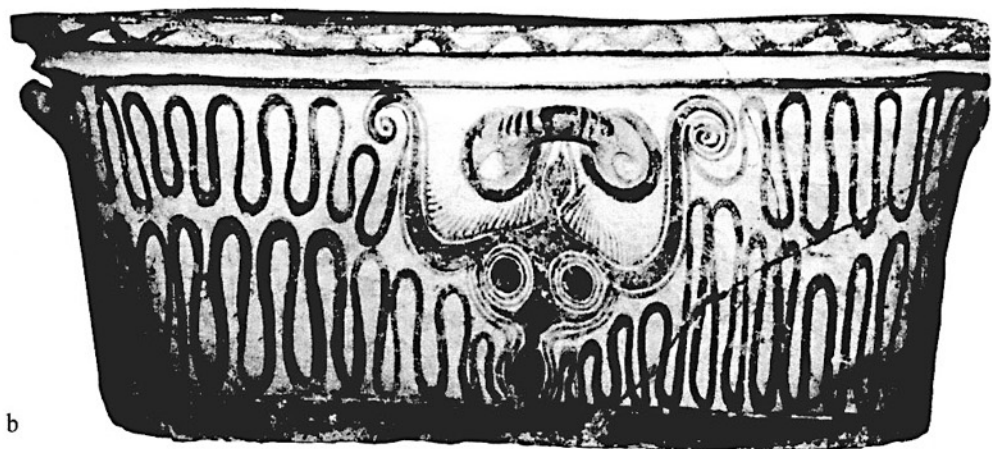
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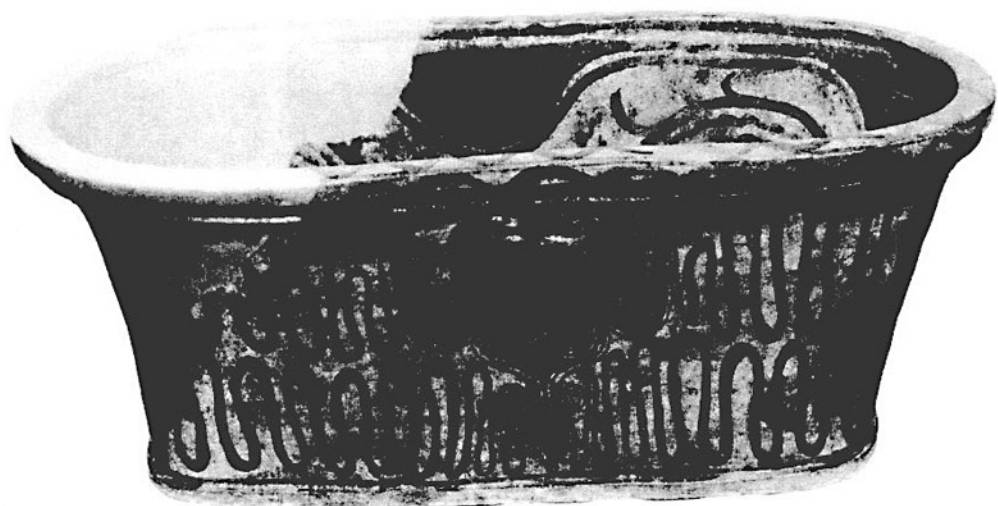


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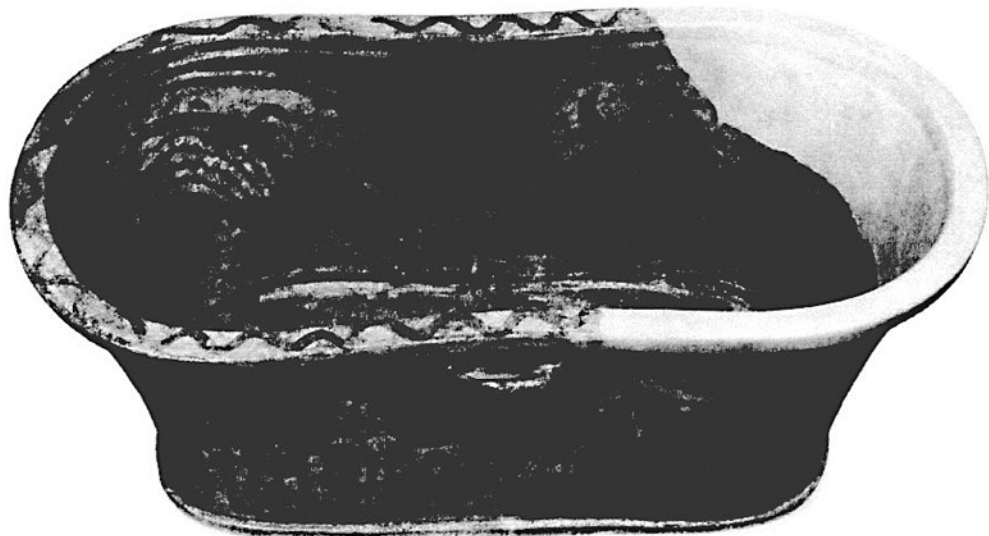








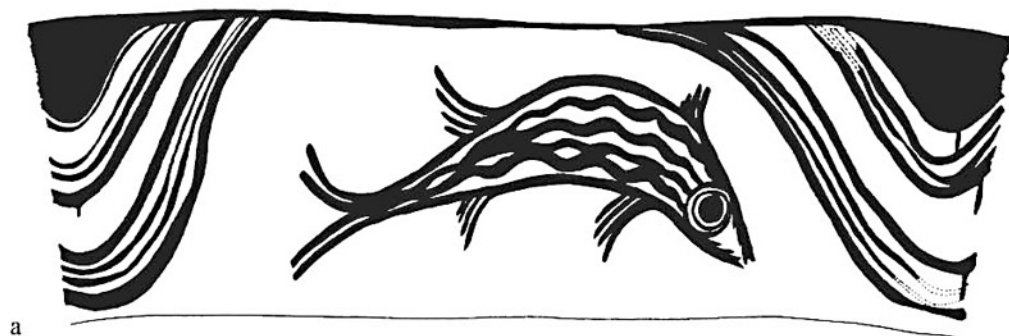
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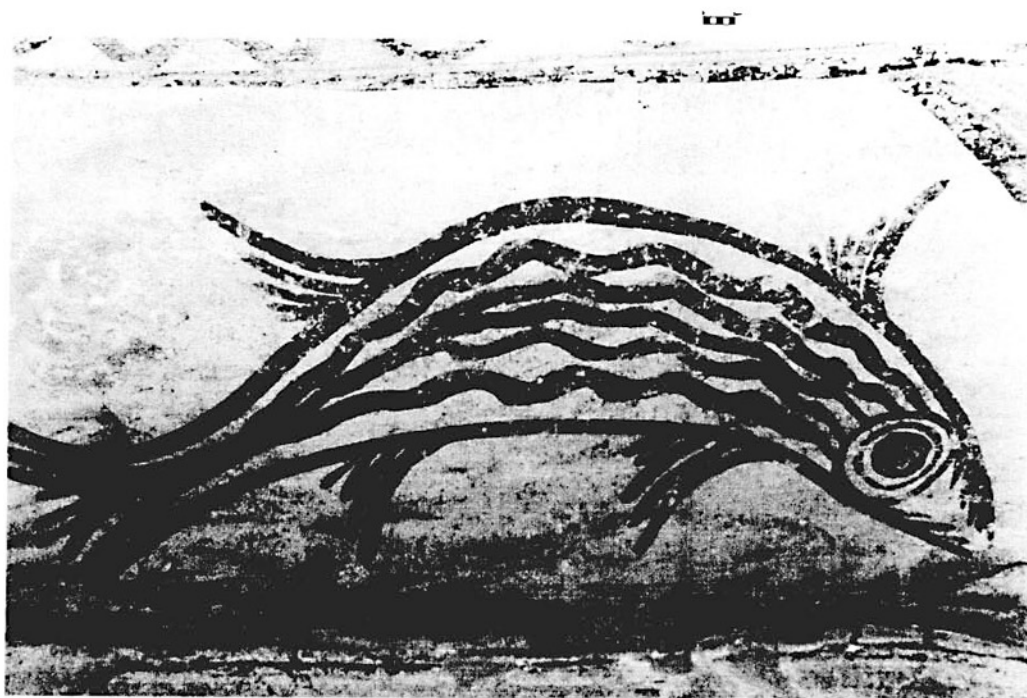
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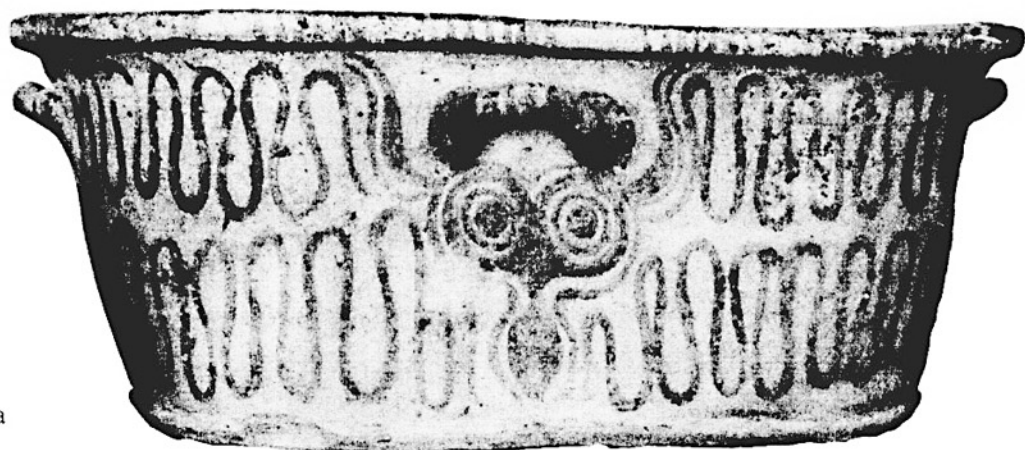


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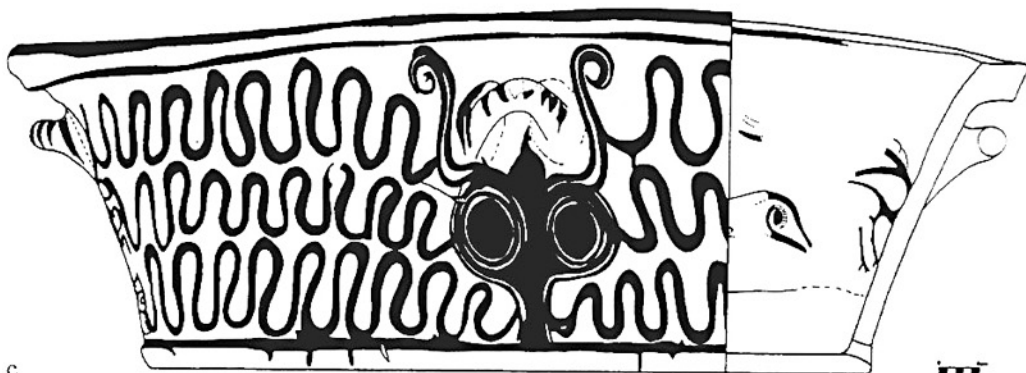




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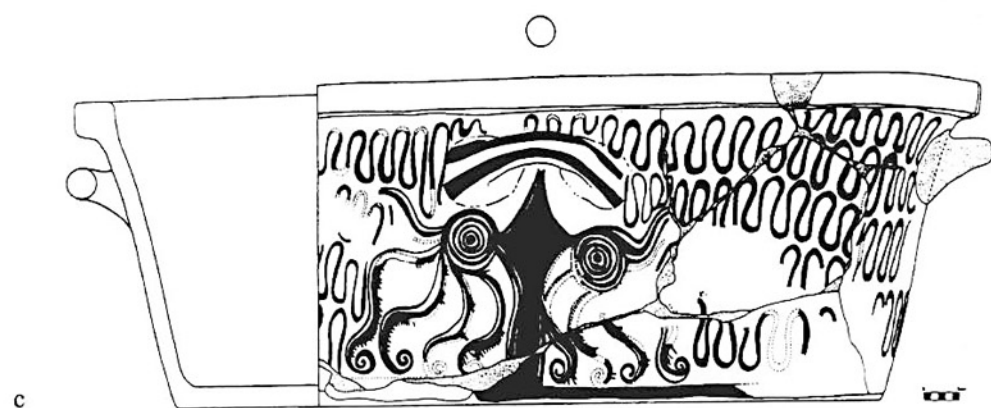
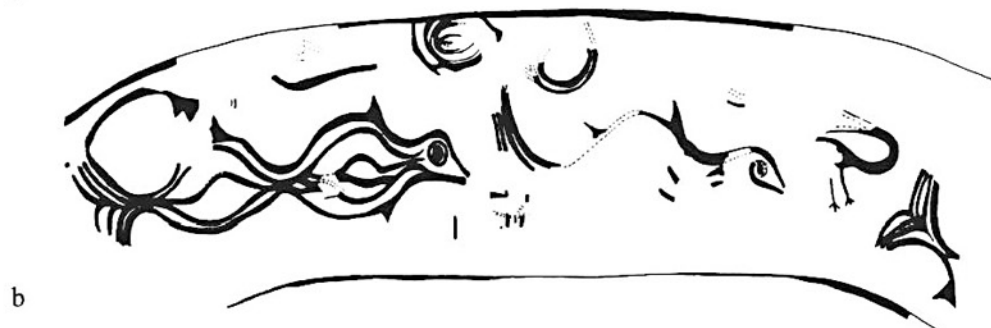
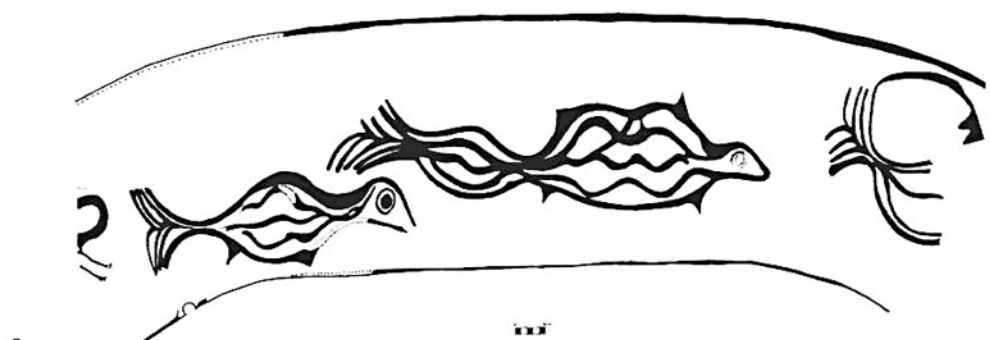


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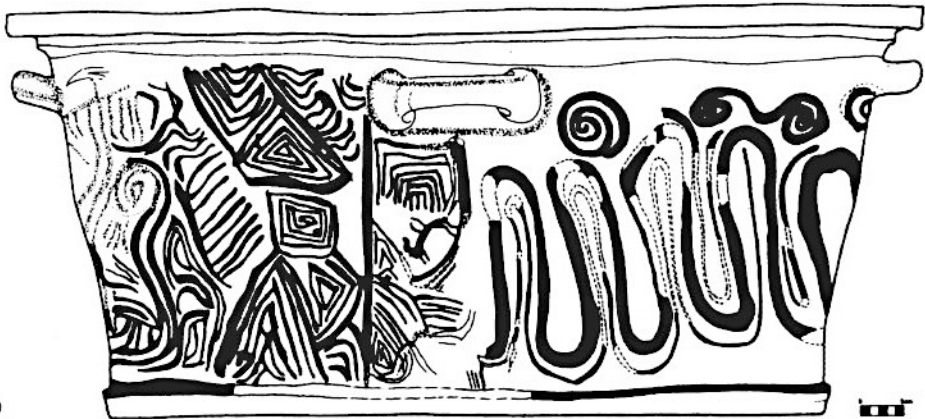
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100





a



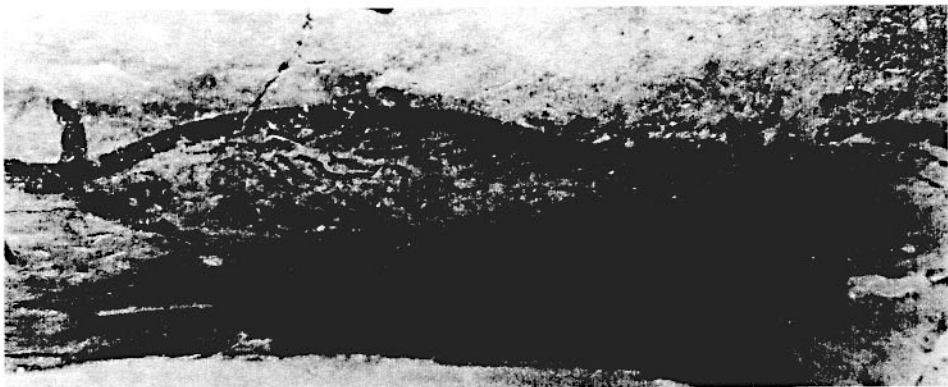
b



c



d



e