

Petras, Siteia

25 years of excavations and studies

Edited by *Metaxia Tsipopoulou*



Monographs of the Danish Institute at Athens
Volume 16

Petras, Siteia

– 25 years of excavations and studies

Acts of a two-day conference held at the Danish Institute at
Athens, 9–10 October 2010

Edited by

Metaxia Tsipopoulou



Monographs of the Danish Institute at Athens
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Petras, Siteia – 25 years of excavations and studies

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Volume 16

General Editor: Rune Frederiksen

Graphic design: Erik Hallager and Garifalia Kostopoulou

Proof reading: Metaxia Tsipopoulou, David W. Rupp, Maria Psallida

Translation of abstracts: Metaxia Tsipopoulou

Printed at Narayana Press

Printed in Denmark on permanent paper

Conforming to ANSI Z 39.48-1992

The publication was sponsored by:

The Institute for Aegean Prehistory

ISBN: 978 87 7124 053 5

Distributed by:

AARHUS UNIVERSITY PRESS

Langelandsgade 177

DK-8200 Århus N

www.unipress.dk

Gazelle Book Services Ltd.

White Cross Mills, Hightown

Lancaster LA1 4XS, England

www.gazellebooks.com

The David Brown Book Company (DBBC)

P.O. Box 511

Oakville, CT 06779, USA

www.oxbowbooks.com

Front cover:

Dapper, O. 1688, *Naukeurige Beschryving der Einlanden in de Archipel der Middelantsche zee; en ontrent dezelve, gelegen*, 215 (Collection of Metaxia Tsipopoulou)

Graphic design by Garifalia Kostopoulou and Metaxia Tsipopoulou

Back cover:

Graphic design by Garifalia Kostopoulou and Metaxia Tsipopoulou

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Defining the end of the Prepalatial period at Petras[★]

Metaxia Tsipopoulou

Abstract

The palace of Petras was built slightly later than other similar buildings, at the beginning of MM IIA. This date was established by the excavation of floors in stratigraphical trenches within the palace. Furthermore, the so-called Lakkos, a large secondary deposit in Sector III of the settlement, contained a large quantity of fragmentary pottery of very good quality, dated in the late Prepalatial period (MM IB–beginning of MM IIA). Petras was an important center throughout the Prepalatial period. In EM III–MM IB, the social and economic factors that led to the construction of the palace and the establishment of a palatial economy and administration were already present, lacking only their architectural expression. The on going excavation of the cemetery of the same period, important for its architecture and the movable finds, suggests that the social differentiation, even among elite groups, was already pronounced before the construction of the palace. The present paper presents, in a preliminary form, the ceramic assemblage of House Tomb 2, to date the most important burial building in the cemetery, and compares it with the contemporary pottery of the stratigraphical trenches of the palace, and of the Lakkos deposit.

The excavation at Petras has offered us the rare chance of investigating an urban settlement (EM II–LM IIIB) and its palace (MM IIA–LM IB) as well as an important, practically un plundered cemetery (EM I–MM IIA).¹ The intensification of the studies for the final publications in recent years, by an international team of experts, enabled us to define the chronology of many deposits, coming from the settlement, the palace and the cemetery.²

The present paper aims at presenting the chronological evidence, following the preliminary study of the relative pottery groups, from the following areas of the excavations:

– House Tomb 2 (HT 2), the most important building of the cemetery excavated to date.³

for the conservation of the finds; Douglas Faulmann for the drawings of HT 2; The drawings of Σ -palace are by M. Wedde; Chronis Papanikolopoulos for the photographs of HT 2; The photographs of the finds of the Σ -palace are by the author; Donald Haggis for many fruitful conversations; Garifalia Kostopoulou for the plates. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the 11th Cretological, in Rethymnon, in the fall of 2011. The Petras volume is a good opportunity to have it published together with other papers dealing with the chronology of late Prepalatial Petras. The form is still preliminary. More study of all the related deposits will be necessary, before more secure conclusions are reached.

¹ Tsipopoulou 2007b; 2010b; 2011; 2012; in press a; this volume, Introduction; Tsipopoulou this volume, 117–31; Triantaphyllou 2010b; Triantaphyllou *et al.* forthcoming; Betancourt this volume; Ferrence *et al.* this volume; Krzyszkowska this volume; Dierckx this volume.

² Tsipopoulou & Hallager 2010, 49–68, 135–153; Tsipopoulou 2012; in press c; Haggis 2007; this volume; Tsipopoulou & Alberti 2012; Rupp & Tsipopoulou this volume; Rupp this volume; Papadatos 2008; Papadatos *et al.* in press.

³ Betancourt this volume, fig. 1a, Tsipopoulou this volume 117–31, fig. 2; Tsipopoulou in press a.

[★] Warmest thanks to: Yiannis Papadatos for the excavation of HT 2, and the test trenches dug before the construction of the paths; Michael Wedde, who participated at the excavation of the stratigraphical trenches of the palace; Clio Zervaki

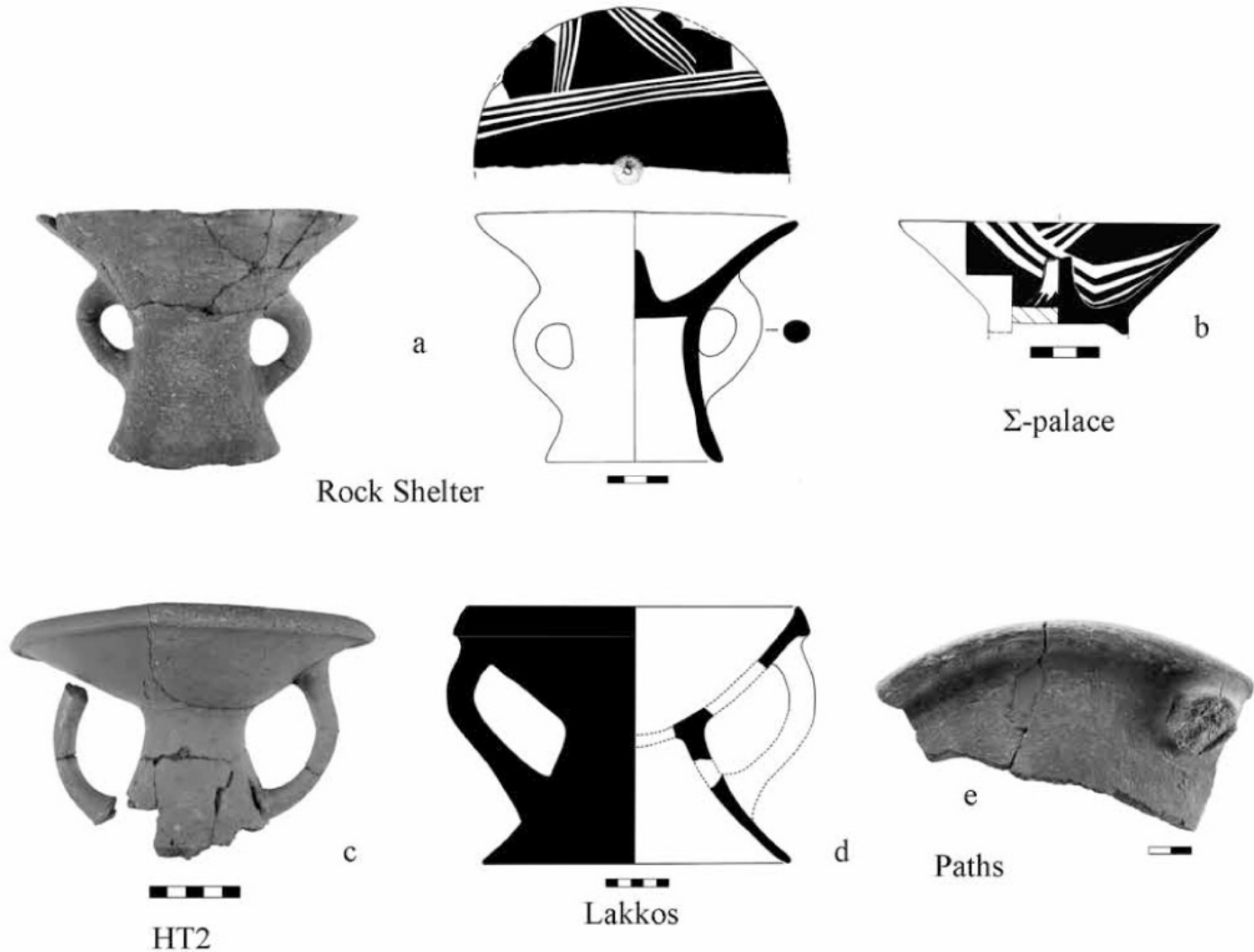


Fig. 14. a) P.TSU06/110; b) P95/226; c) P.TSK05/129; d) L284; e) P05/338.

Of special interest is a group of nine large four-handled pithoid jars, (*ca.* 40–45 cm in height); six of them are bridge-spouted, one has an open spout, and another two are without a spout. They were found in HT 2 (Fig. 13a–i, l, o) but, to date, not in other house tombs of the cemetery, nor in the Rock Shelter. Their capacity is *ca.* 15 lt and their decoration is similar to that of the dishes, light-on-dark, with systems of bands and concentric angles. These vessels were found in rooms that contained burials, so apparently were connected to a special funerary rite, connected with the bodies and were not used by the living, contrary to the dishes stored in the special rooms. Similar fragmentary pithoid jars, either bridge-spouted or with an open spout, with spiral decoration and also undecorated, were found both in the stratigraphical trenches (Fig. 13j, m) and the Lakkos (Fig. 13k),⁴³ as well as in the test

trenches excavated prior to the construction of the paths for the visitors (Fig. 13n, p).

A final group of vessels related to feasting, that connect settlement and burials at Petras in the latest Prepalatial period are pedestalled fruitstands. They belong to two different types: one, quite uncommon has a conical protrusion internally in the middle of the base. They were used both for rites in honor of the dead (found in the Votive Deposit 1 and in Room 7 of HT 2, the storage area; Fig. 14c) and probably as grave goods, as they were found also in the Rock Shelter (Fig. 14a). In the Lakkos (Fig. 14d),⁴⁴ in the stratigraphical trenches of the palace (Fig. 14b)⁴⁵ and the test trenches of the

⁴³ Haggis 2007, fig. 20i.

⁴⁴ Haggis 2007, figs. 22h, 23.

⁴⁵ Tsipopoulou & Wedde 2000, fig. 6.



Fig. 1. P.TSK05/198.



Fig. 2. P.TSK05/409.

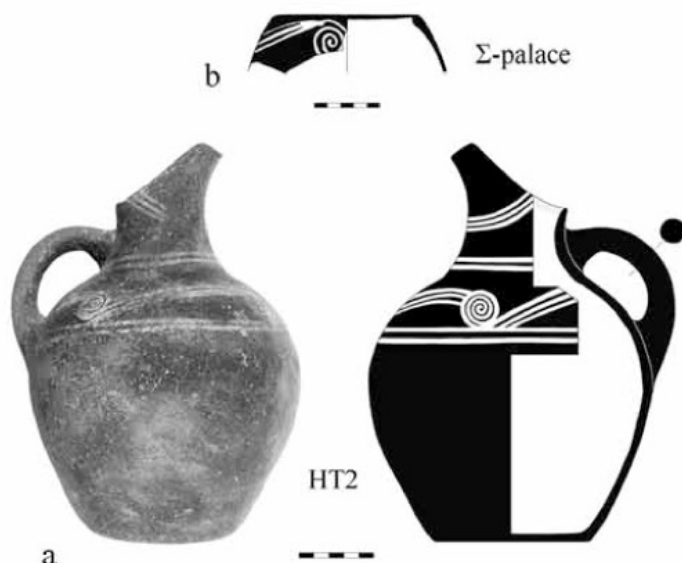


Fig. 3. a) P.TSK05/536; b) P94/215.

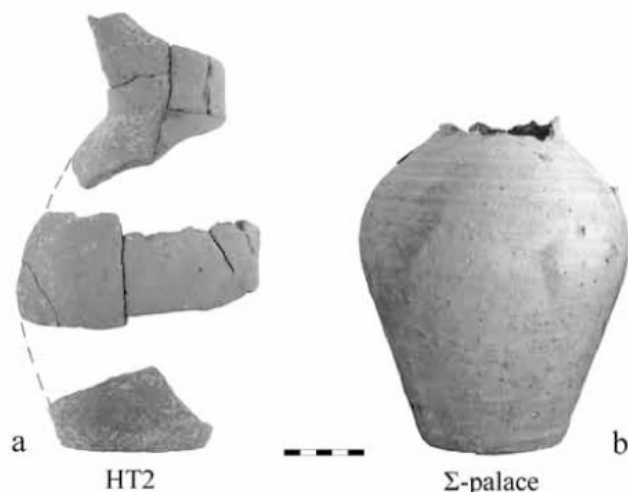


Fig. 4. a) P.TSK05/331; b) P95/293.

– The stratigraphical trenches in the palace.⁴
 – Two parts of the settlement, a) the Lakkos in Sector III,⁵ and b) a late Prepalatial deposit which came to light during the trial excavations prior to the construction of the paths for the visitors, in the same general area.⁶

HT 2 is clearly distinguished from the rest of the burial buildings in the Petras cemetery, not only for its large size and its complex architecture, but also for its finds. It comprises eight areas, two of them exclusively for the storage of vessels used in ceremonies, especially types connected with food consumption. Most burials were secondary, but there were also a few primary burials, in two larnakes and a pithos, as well as another one directly on the soil. HT 2, both for the dating and the burial practices, shows the transition from the Pre- to the Protopalatial period.⁷

Furthermore, the unique group of five seals

made of hard stones,⁸ two of them with inscriptions in the Cretan hieroglyphic script, suggests that the building was used for the burial of people belonging to the most prominent social group of the Late Prepalatial-early Protopalatial Petras. It should be noted that seals are rare in other house tombs. The hieroglyphic inscriptions indicate that their owner(s) enjoyed a prominent social rank, connected with palatial administration.

The stratigraphical trenches in the palace offered

⁴ Tsipopoulou this volume, Introduction, fig. 4; Tsipopoulou & Wedde 2000; Tsipopoulou in press b.

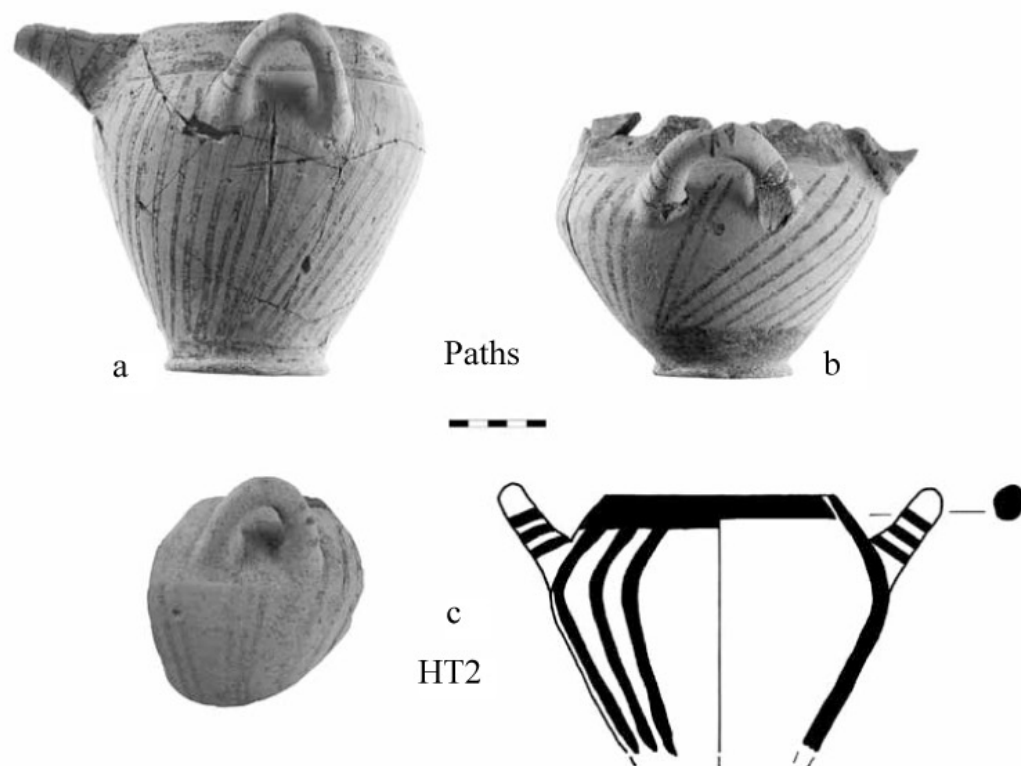
⁵ Tsipopoulou this volume, Introduction, fig. 5a-d; Haggis 2007; this volume.

⁶ Tsipopoulou this volume, Introduction; see also Tsipopoulou this volume, Introduction, figs. 6-7.

⁷ Tsipopoulou 2011b; in press a.

⁸ Krzyszkowska this volume.

Fig. 5. a) P05/83;
b) P05/128;
c) P.TSK05/317.



a secure *terminus post quem* for the construction of the central building, in MM IB.⁹ The palace was erected at the beginning of MM IIA, although the floors of this period were not preserved. The excavation of the deposit containing the hieroglyphic archive offered a secure *terminus ad quem* for the destruction of the first palace in MM IIB.¹⁰

Outside of the palace there were other important, both for the quantity, as well as for the quality, MM IB deposits, the most significant being the so-called Lakkos, a very large secondary deposit on the east slope of Hill I at Petras, at a distance less than 100 m from the plateau of the palace, that was partially excavated.¹¹ Related to the pottery of the Lakkos, is the ceramic assemblages that came to light in the test trenches excavated before the paths for the visitors were constructed, close to the Lakkos and to Sector III in general. They belonged to primary deposits, including foundation deposits.¹²

The chronological horizon of the pottery of HT 2 is EM III–MM IB. (possibly also initial phase of MM IIA). The assemblage has good parallels among better known pottery groups of eastern Crete. One of the earliest vases in HT 2 is an EM III jug, (Fig. 1) with a parallel from Lebena.¹³ Most of the vases are identical to specimens excavated at Gournia. It is possible that they have been imported from the Mirabello area, although this cannot be proven

as yet, because the petrographic analyses have not been completed. A jug is a good example of this class.¹⁴ (Fig. 2). Another category of vessels has a characteristic MM IA light-on-dark decoration and finds exact parallels among the material from the North Trench at Gournia (Fig. 3a),¹⁵ as well as from Mochlos¹⁶ and Palaikastro.¹⁷

There are interesting comparisons and exact parallels between the pottery of HT 2 and that of the stratigraphical trenches of the palace (Fig. 4a–b). The same spiraliform motif decorates a bridge-spouted jug from a stratigraphical trench in the palace (Fig. 3b), while two MM IB bridge-spouted jugs, identical for the shape and the decoration, come from a foundation deposit in the test trenches of the paths for the visitors (Fig. 5a–b), and have an exact parallel from HT 2 (Fig. 5c). The shape is common also at Knossos.¹⁸

⁹ Tsipopoulou & Wedde 2000; Tsipopoulou in press b.

¹⁰ Tsipopoulou & Hallager 2010, 49–68, 135–53.

¹¹ Haggis 2007; this volume.

¹² Tsipopoulou this volume, Introduction.

¹³ Alexiou & Warren 2004, 185, fig. 51, no. 21.

¹⁴ Betancourt & Silverman 1991, fig. 5, no. 380.

¹⁵ Hawes *et al.* 1908, nos. 17, 24.

¹⁶ Seager 1912, 42, figs. 18, 19, no. V.a.

¹⁷ Bosanquet & Dawkins 1923, pl. III, m.

¹⁸ Macdonald & Knappett 2007, 66, fig. 3.4, no. 163.

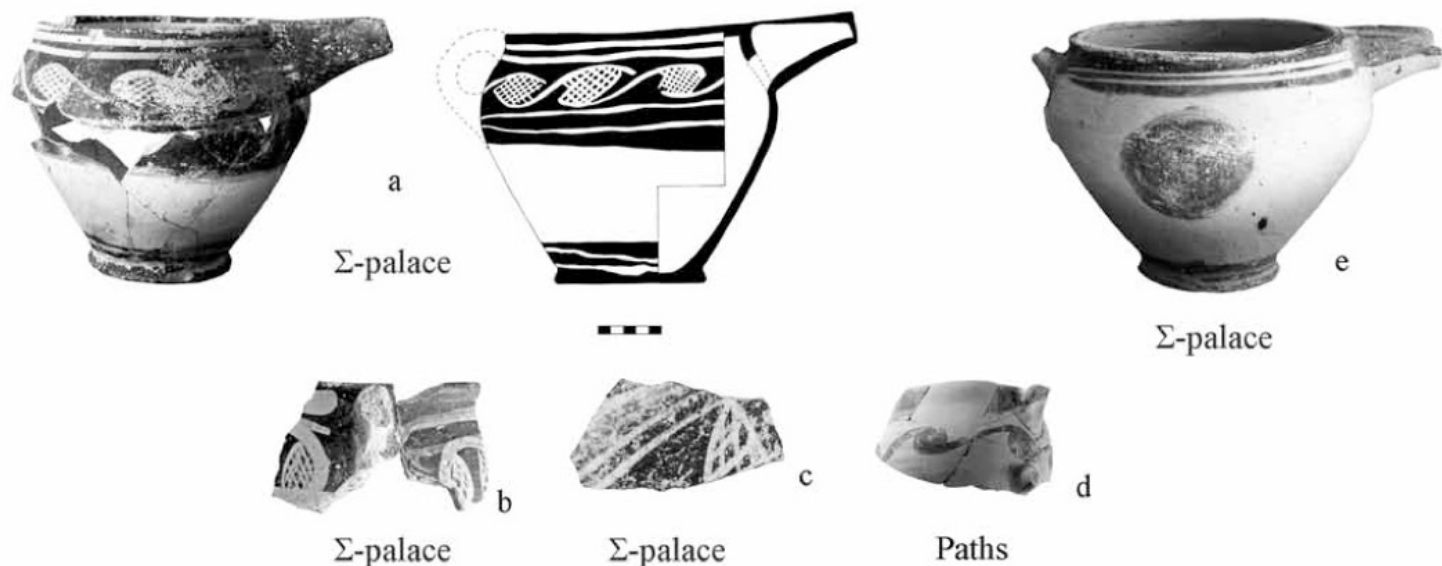


Fig. 6. a) P95/1160; b) P95/1180; c) P92/771; d) P05/327; e) P95/1457.



Fig. 7. a) P.TSK05/926; b) P95/1177; c) P92/293; d) P95/289; e) L10; f) P92/874; g) L325.

A slightly different type of MM IA bridge-spouted jugs, not present in the HT 2 material, was found in the stratigraphical trenches of the palace (Fig. 6a-c, e) and in the test trenches of the paths for the visitors (Fig. 6d). The closest parallels come from Gournia.¹⁹ One of these jugs has a decorative

motif very common in many Prepalatial deposits at Petras,²⁰ both on semi-closed and on open vessels,

¹⁹ Hawes *et al.* 1908, no. 17.

²⁰ Tsipopoulou in press b; Tsipopoulou & Wedde 2000, Σ7, 375, fig. 9, P94/215.

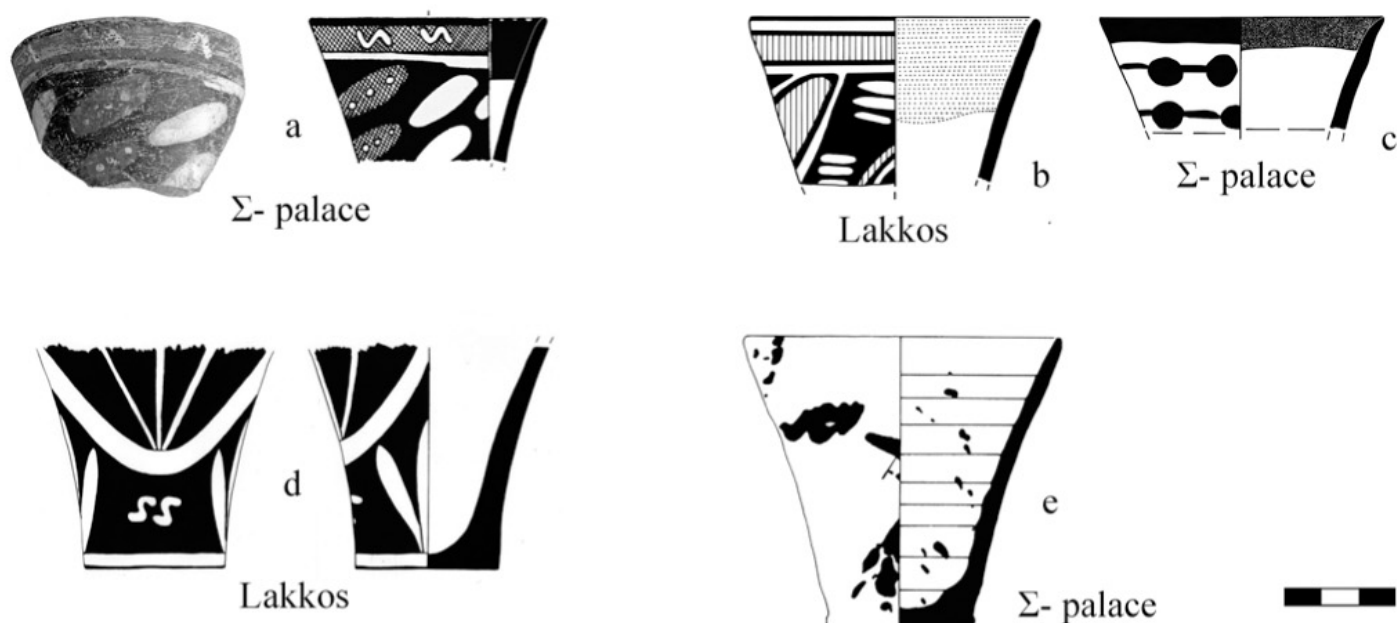


Fig. 8. a) P95/294; b) L62; c) P94/bag 219/17; d) P95/610; e) P95/295.

especially on tumblers, the so-called seaweeds (*capsules d'algues*), with many parallels from Malia.²¹

A third type of MM IB bridge-spouted jugs, with low gravity center, connects HT 2 (Fig. 7a), the Lakkos²² (Fig. 7d, e, g) and the stratigraphical trenches in the palace (Fig. 7b, c, f). The shape is rather common at Petras, but less so outside of eastern Crete. For the decoration the parallels come from Gournia²³ and Mochlos.²⁴

The most common type of drinking vessel in the settlement is the tumbler (Fig. 8). In the house tombs it is practically non-existent, at least in the material already studied, i.e., the Rock Shelter, HT 2 and Room 6 of HT 1. On the contrary the two excavated votive deposits contained a significant number of tumblers. This probably suggested that tumblers were not used as burial offerings. The material of the Lakkos²⁵ (Fig. 8b, d) is again very similar to that of the stratigraphical trenches of the palace (Fig. 8a, c, e). It is interesting that both deposits contain cups of the “alternating style”, MM IB in date, late Prepalatial for Petras.²⁶ It is also interesting to note that the spatter ware decoration, so common both in the Lakkos material²⁷ and in the stratigraphical trenches is absent from HT 2. Haggis suggested that the decorative motifs used on pottery, and also on seals, figurines, etc. could possibly identify certain elite groups, or families, within the community.²⁸

It would be very interesting to check the validity of this idea, and to establish whether this decoration is encountered on pottery from other house tombs of the Petras cemetery. A few more tumblers with various types of light-on-dark decoration and also with polychrome decoration and “alternating style”²⁹ as well as spatter ware come from various deposits of the settlement and the stratigraphical trenches in the palace³⁰ (Fig. 9a-j).

Carinated cups, with the carination on the lower part of the body and a flat base, are absent from HT 2 but are very common both in the Lakkos³¹ and in the stratigraphical trenches of the palace (Fig. 10a-d). The parallels come from Palaikastro.³²

²¹ Van Effenterre 1980, vol. I, fig. 103.

²² Haggis 2007, fig. 9a, c.

²³ Hawes *et al.* 1908, nos. 8, 9.

²⁴ Seager 1912, 47, figs. 18, 19, no. IV.2.

²⁵ Haggis 2007, 732, fig. 11a.

²⁶ Floyd 1997.

²⁷ Haggis 2007, 731–7, figs. 13, 14.

²⁸ Haggis 2007, 755–70.

²⁹ Cf. also examples from Palaikastro, Bosanquet & Dawkins 1923, pl. 10, k, l, m; Knappett & Collar 2007, fig. 18.88.

³⁰ Knappett & Collar 2007, figs. 7a, b, f-j, 11a-h, k, 13g-i, 14a,b; Tsiopoulou & Wedde 2000, 375, fig. 10.

³¹ Haggis 2007, fig. 6c-e.

³² Bosanquet & Dawkins 1923, pl. 5b, c; Knappett & Collar 2007, figs. 6.18, 18.93, 94.

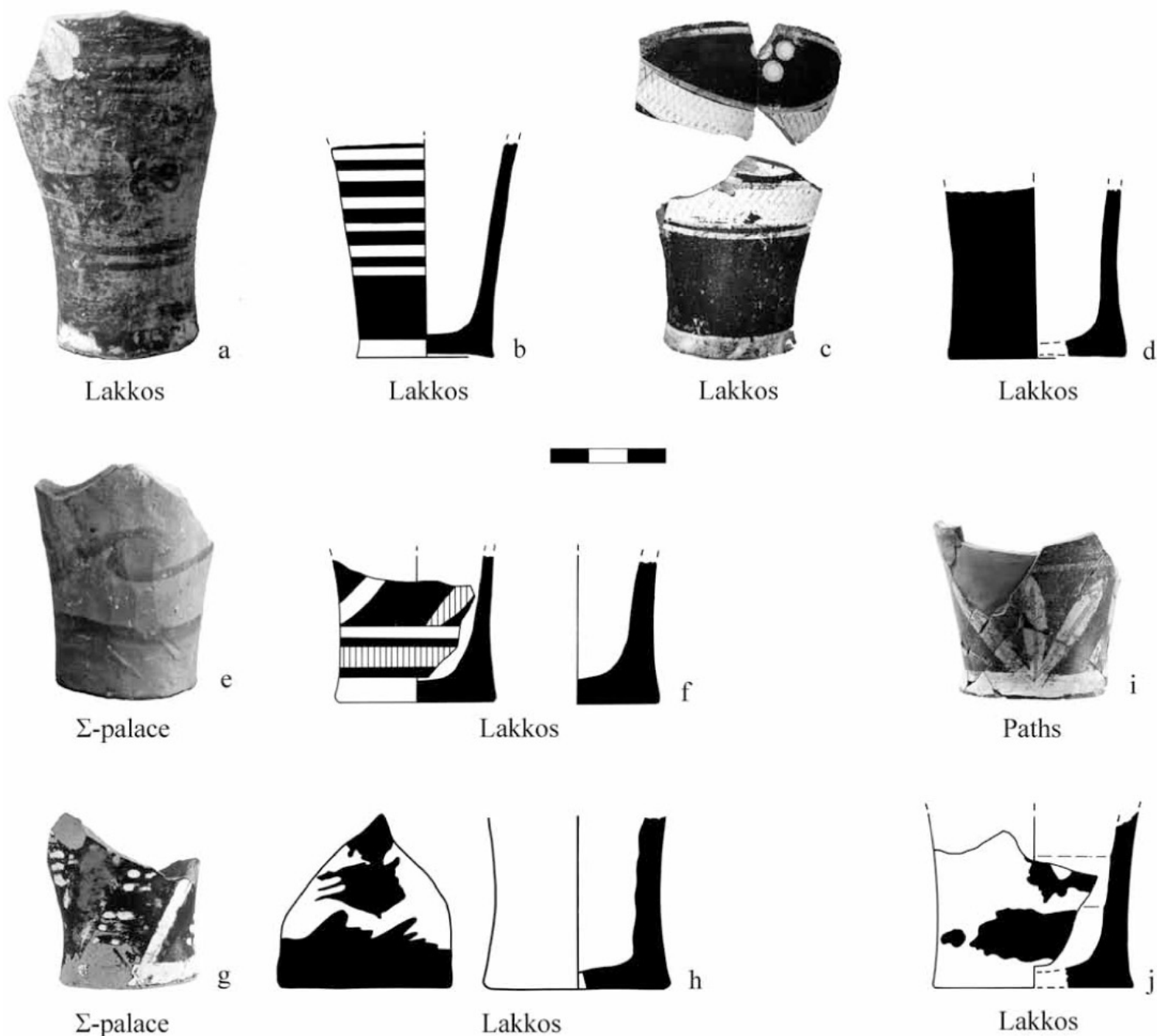


Fig. 9. a) P95/1436; b) L617; c) P95/351; d) L616; e) P95/211; f) L619; g) P92/717; h) L432; i) P05/336; j) L691.

Wheel-made carinated cups with a disoid base and elevated ribbon handle very numerous in the Lakkos material³³ were found as well in the test trenches of the paths for the visitors and also in HT 2 (Fig. 10e-j). The shape is quite common at Palaikastro.³⁴ Similar cups, without the pronounced base are common both from the Lakkos and the stratigraphical trenches of the palace. A similar MM IB/IIA cup found in the Rock Shelter of the cemetery, with an exact parallel in the Lakkos represent a *terminus ad quem* for the deposition in the Rock Shelter, after the possible cleaning of a

house tomb, at the end of the Prepalatial period (Fig. 10k-p). A unique one-handled spouted cup with thick walls has an exact parallel from Palaikastro (Fig. 10q).³⁵

A type of MM IB/IIA globular cup is represented by specimen from the stratigraphical trenches in

³³ Haggis 2007, fig. 6a, b.

³⁴ Bosanquet & Dawkins 1923, figs. 4f, 5d; Knappett & Collar 2007, fig. 6.20, 23.

³⁵ Knappett & Collar 2007, fig. 8.36.

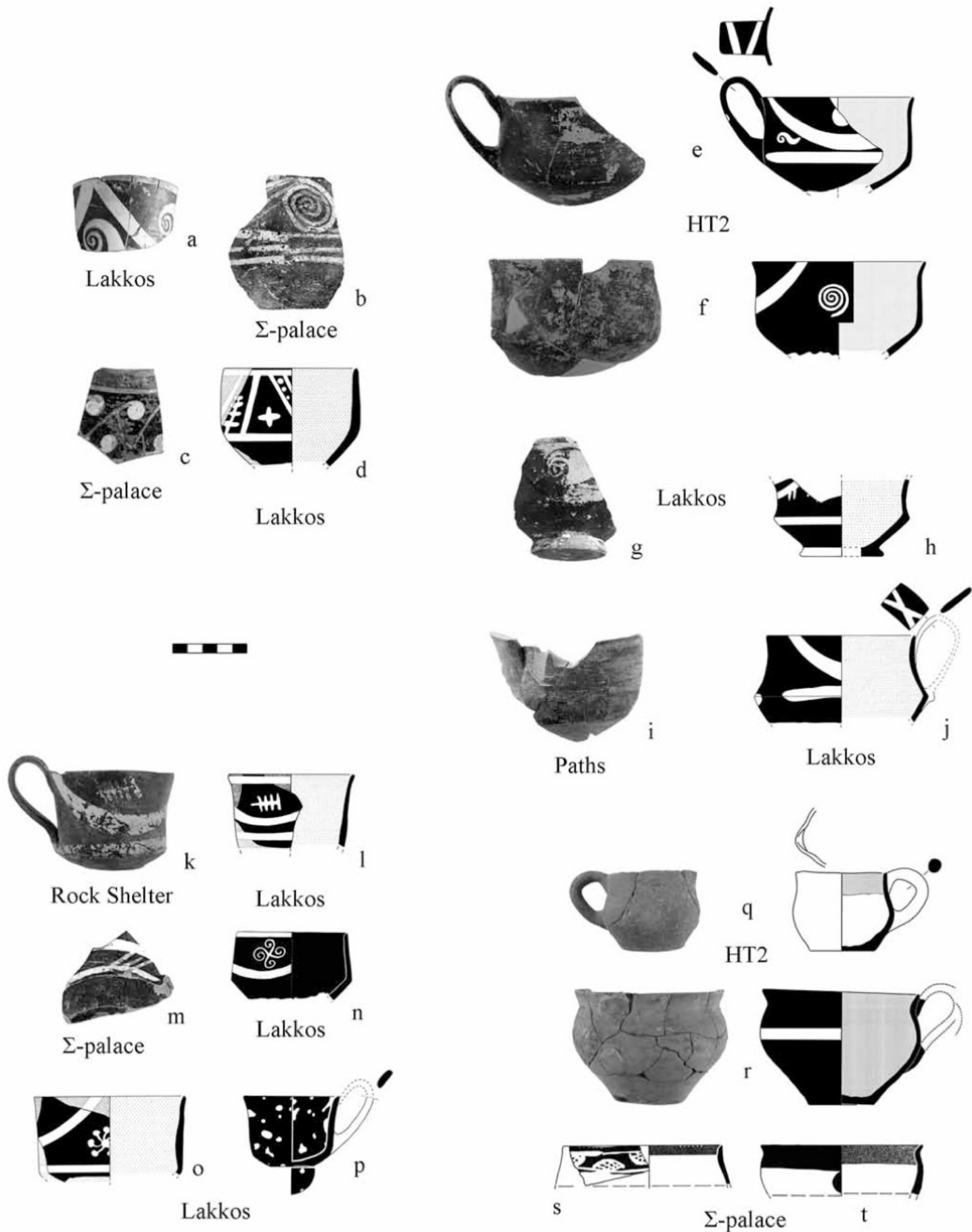


Fig. 10. a) P95/1137; b) P93/111; c) P92/243; d) L165; e) P.TSK05/469; f) P.TSK05/283; g) P95/1427; h) L630; i) P05/332; j) L93; k) P.TSU06/28; l) L44; m) P92/856; n) P95/781; o) L164; p) L326; q) P.TSK05/61; r) P.TSK05/354; s) P95/747; t) P94/bag 219/15.

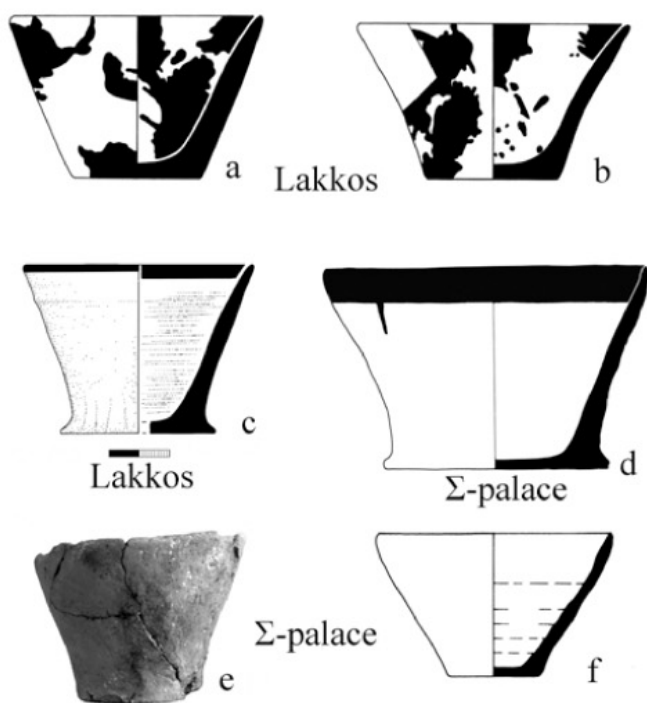


Fig. 11. a) L610; b) L609; c) L340; d) P95/216; e) P95/1179; f) P95/231.

the palace, and has parallels from Mesara³⁶ and from eastern Crete.³⁷ A globular cup, from HT 2, dated to MM IIA, is among the latest pottery in this

deposit, and has a parallel from the stratigraphical trenches in the palace. This type seems to be absent from the Lakkos, and probably offers a *terminus ad quem* for the construction of the palace (Fig. 10r-t).

Handleless conical cups were not identified in the cemetery as opposed to what was the case in the Mesara at the same time, although it is certain that in MM IB this type of cup was already produced at Petras, as suggested by undecorated and decorated specimens both from the Lakkos³⁸ (Fig. 11a-c) and the stratigraphical trenches of the palace (Fig. 11d-f).³⁹ It is quite probable that, instead of handleless conical cups, dishes were used in the funerary rites and ceremonies connected with HT 2. More than four dozens of them, made of only two types of clay, and probably of local manufacture, were stored in one of the rooms of the building, and many more were initially deposited on the

³⁶ Alexiou & Warren 2004, 158, fig. 140b, no. 14.

³⁷ Cf. from Mochlos: Seager 1912, 47, figs. 18, 19, no. IV.2; from Priniatikos Pyrgos: Betancourt 1984, 175, pl. 21, no. 68.

³⁸ Haggis 2007, fig. 14c-l, 18c.

³⁹ Tsipopoulou & Wedde 2000, 362, n.10, fig. 6.

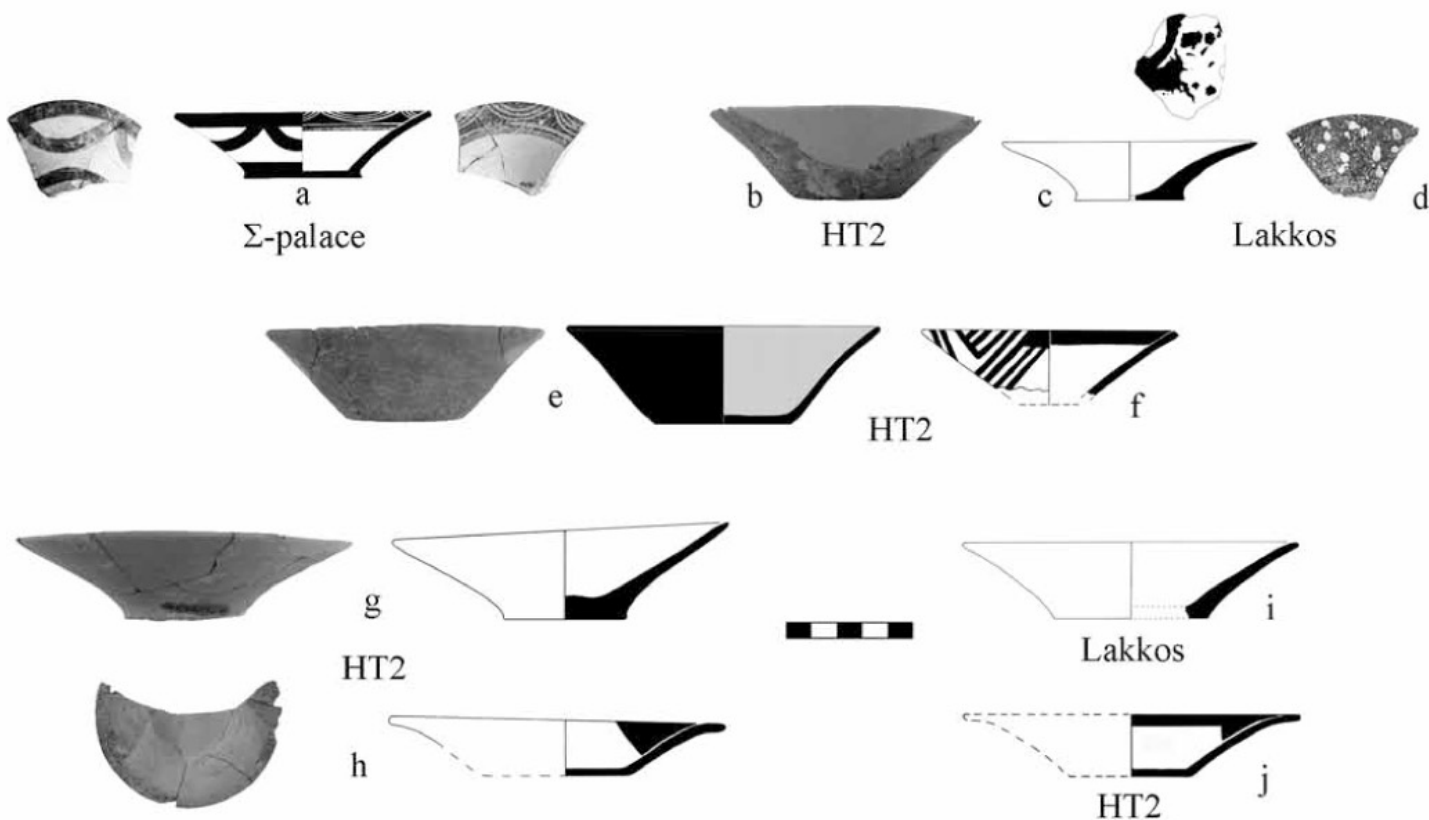


Fig. 12. a) P95/435; b) P.TSK05/754; c) L181; d) P95/1308; e) P.TSK05/755; f) P.TSK05/969; g) P.TSK05/140; h) P.TSK05/300; i) L43; j) P.TSK05/978.

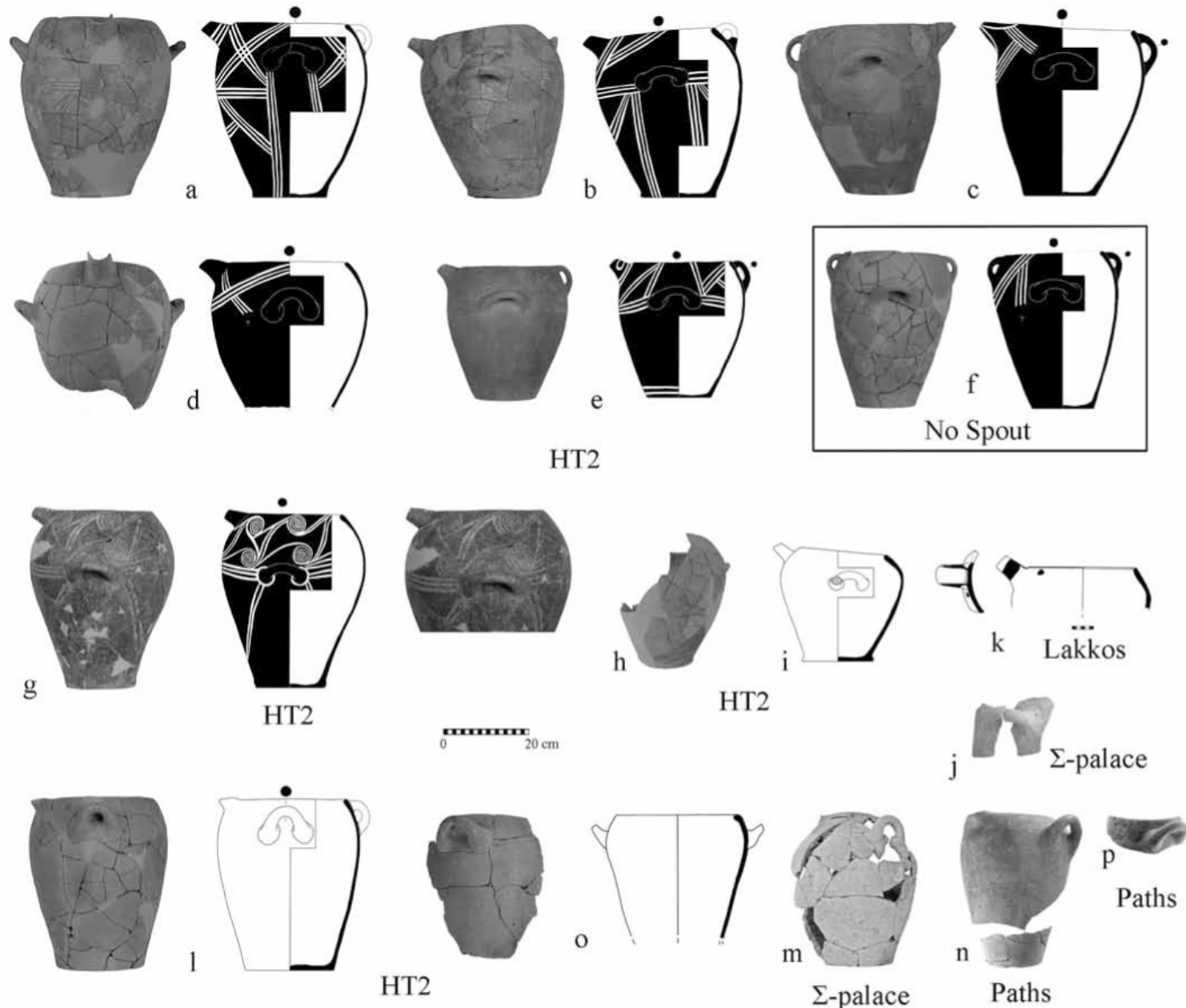


Fig. 13. a) P.TSK05/631; b) P.TSK05/389; c) P.TSK05/535; d) P.TSK05/629; e) P.TSK05/770; f) P.TSK05/344; g) P.TSK05/627; h) P.TSK05/1007; i) P.TSK05/883; j) P94/bag 136/2; k) L40; l) P.TSK05/158; m) P94/536; n) P05/339; o) P.TSK05/208; p) P05/337.

benches and the platform of the east side of the building, and were found fallen in front of them. A few typical examples are decorated in light-on-dark on the interior surface with groups of concentric angles, while on the exterior surface they have wide bands in dark paint on a light background.⁴⁰ A few more shallow dishes with similar decoration from the storage areas of HT 2 (Rooms 7 and 8), on which the concentric angles are combined with rosettes have parallels on open shapes from the Lakkos.⁴¹

Deep dishes are either plain, dipped in paint twice from the rim, and in spatter ware, and are present both in the Lakkos⁴² and HT 2. In the stratigraphical trenches of the palace another type of MM IB dish was identified with polychrome decoration on the interior surface, which was absent from the material of HT 2 (Fig. 12a-j).

⁴⁰ Tsipopoulou this volume, 117-31, fig. 4.

⁴¹ Haggis 2007, fig. 6d.

⁴² Haggis 2007, fig. 15b, 21g.

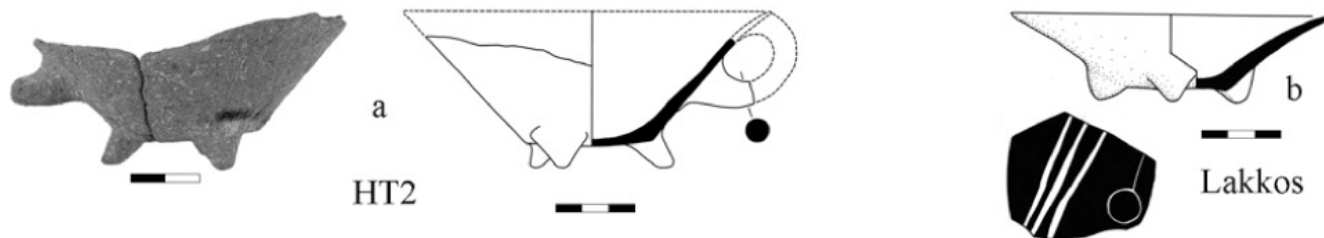


Fig. 15. a) P.TSK05/308; b) L40.

paths for the visitors (Fig. 14e) fruitstands, especially made of red clay with a burnished surface, are very common. Finally incense burners are another type of vessel present both in the Lakkos and in the tombs (Fig. 15a-b). One specimen from the Lakkos (Fig. 15b) is decorated with systems of concentric angles and bands in the light-on-dark technique,⁴⁶ very similar to the decoration of the plates and the pithoid jars in HT 2.

The study of the chronological phases and the ceramic types of late Prepalatial Petras continues intensively. Although it is still far from complete, it has already offered some precious indications about the social organization of the site, whose importance goes beyond eastern Crete, and included the only Protopalatial palace east of Malia. It is significant that the progress of the study has identified more and more clearly the existence of elite groups in the society of Petras, clearly distinct from each

other, exactly as one would expect before the construction of the palace. The beginning of MM II is marked, not only by the construction of the central building on the large plateau of Hill I, but also by large scale urban re-arrangements of the space in general. For their construction two conditions were necessary, a) the mobilization of a large working force, and b) the establishment of a wide social consensus. It is not easy as yet to decide whether the relationships between these elite groups were peaceful and symbiotic rather than hostile and antagonistic, at the end of the Prepalatial. It is possible, however, that the continuation of the excavation and the study will shed more light on this important issue.

⁴⁶ Haggis 2007, fig. 8i.

Καθορίζοντας το τέλος της Προανακτορικής φάσης στον Πετρά Σητείας.

Το ανάκτορο του Πετρά Σητείας, ιδρύθηκε αργότερα από άλλα γνωστά, όχι νωρίτερα από την αρχική φάση της Μεσομινωικής ΙΑ. Στο σημείο αυτό συγκλίνουν όλα τα μέχρι σήμερα δεδομένα, συγκεκριμένα δάπεδα που ήρθαν στο φως σε στρωματογραφικές τομές κάτω από το ίδιο το κτίριο, αλλά και τα ευρήματα του λεγόμενου Λάκκου, ενός μεγάλου αποθέτη στον οικισμό, ο οποίος περιείχε κεραμική της τελικής Προανακτορικής. Όλα αυτά τα στοιχεία υποδεικνύουν ότι ο Πετράς υπήρξε σημαντικό κέντρο της Προανακτορικής περιόδου στην Κρήτη, και ότι κατά την ΠΜ ΙΙΙ–ΜΜ ΙΒ οι κοινωνικές πολιτικές και οικονομικές εξελίξεις, οι οποίες αμέσως μετά οδήγησαν στην ίδρυση του ανακτόρου, ήταν ήδη παρούσες και ανέμεναν μόνον την αρχιτεκτονική τους έκφραση. Η χρήση του νεκροταφείου του Πετρά, εξαιρετικά σημαντικού σε έκταση και πλούτο ευρημάτων, τα οποία δείχνουν ιδιαίτερα αναπτυγμένη κοινωνική διαστρωμάτωση, διεκόπη την ίδια εποχή, σύμφωνα με τα μέχρι σήμερα δεδομένα. Στην ανακοίνωση παρουσιάζεται συγκριτικά κεραμική από το Ταφικό Κτίριο 2, το Λάκκο και τις στρωματογραφικές τομές του ανακτόρου.