

# 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

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Edited by

*Metaxia Tsipopoulou*



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# The Prepalatial-early Protopalatial cemetery at Petras, Siteia: a diachronic symbol of social coherence\*

*Metaxia Tsipopoulou*

## *Abstract*

The excavation of the un plundered cemetery of Petras, consisting of house tombs, with complex plans, started in 2004. To date, 11 such buildings have been located and partially or totally excavated, the total number, as well as the actual size of the necropolis, being still unspecified. Also a rock shelter was excavated near the house tombs, which contained secondary burials, probably coming from the cleaning of a particular building in MM IB/IIA. The present paper deals with the evidence for the use of the Petras cemetery as an area of diachronic use and a symbolic monument of social coherence for the community, many centuries after the end of its use as a burial place. House Tomb 2, completely excavated, is, to date, the most important building of the Petras cemetery, for its architecture, the movable finds and its dating. It comprises nine spaces and included primary burials, both on the floor and in clay containers, along with many secondary burials. It is situated at the south limit of the cemetery, was constructed in EM III and used until MM IIA. The special interest of its dating and also the very important movable finds (large quantity of pottery, gold bands, unique seals, well preserved palaeoanthropological material) in combination with the evidence, offered by the architecture and by various classes of artifacts, for the organized rituals in honor of the dead, show the significance of this monument for a better understanding of the social evolution in the critical period of the transition from the Prepalatial to the Protopalatial. In the Rock Shelter were found on the surface two Neopalatial vases, a ceremonial jug and a conical cup. Of particular importance for the continuity of use of the space as a symbol for the social coherence of the Petras community is a large LM IIIC megaroid building, accompanied by a peribolos, built partially on top of HT 1. This building was probably connected to special ritual activities in honor of the dead ancestors, showing continuity at Petras of at least two millennia.

## Introduction

Various studies, since the beginning of the 20th century, when Xanthoudides excavated the first Mesara tholoi,<sup>1</sup> and even more since 1970, with Branigan<sup>2</sup> and Soles<sup>3</sup> as the major contributors, have dealt with Prepalatial cemeteries of different architectural types, both in Central and in eastern Crete. The aim was to understand the relationships between the communities of the living and the physical and symbolic areas of the dead. These studies were initially based on evidence from the

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\* The conservation of the finds is by Clio Zervaki; the drawings by Doug Faulman and Jerolyn Morrison; the excavation photos by Yiannis Papadatos and Garifalia Kostopoulou; the aerial photos by Chronis Papanikolopoulos and Kostas Chalikias; the photos of the finds by C. Papanikolopoulos and G. Kostopoulou, who is also responsible for the plates. David Rupp checked my English text. To all of them my warmest thanks.

<sup>1</sup> Xanthoudides 1924.

<sup>2</sup> Branigan 1970a; 1988; 1993; 1998a.

<sup>3</sup> Soles 1992.



Fig. 1. Panoramic view of the Kephala Petras cemetery from the south.

tholoi in the Mesara, and subsequently the important burial complexes of North-Central Crete, especially that of Archanes,<sup>4</sup> and also the house tombs at Malia,<sup>5</sup> Mochlos,<sup>6</sup> Gournia,<sup>7</sup> Palaikastro<sup>8</sup> and Zakros.<sup>9</sup> Concurrently the organization of many Pre- and Protopalatial cemeteries of different architectural types, such as those at Malia,<sup>10</sup> Sphoungaras,<sup>11</sup> and Pacheia Ammos<sup>12</sup> has been examined.

All these studies have identified certain repetitive models of behavior and practices that do not seem to be connected to specific types of tombs, but rather to the social and administrative organization of the societies who built and used the cemeteries, and perceived them as social arenas, for strategies of roles and power.<sup>13</sup> For this purposes, in the archaeological record, one of the most important features is the presence of specialized areas within the cemeteries for the gathering of groups of people, during the burial ceremonies and probably on other occasions too.<sup>14</sup> Based on the movable finds, as well as on the arrangement of open spaces, and the presence of storage areas for pottery, one can assume that these ceremonies involved food and drink consumption, and probably also dancing.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, it has been pointed out that mortuary feasting constitutes a mode of generalized consumption, where food, bodies, persons and memories are consumed, and even the cultural logic of eating is close to the cultural logic of death.<sup>16</sup>

## The Prepalatial-early Protopalatial cemetery of Petras

The excavation, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, of a new, practically unplundered, Prepalatial

and early Protopalatial cemetery at Petras,<sup>17</sup> connected to a long lived urban settlement, excavated since 1985,<sup>18</sup> which became palatial in MM II, is adding significant amount of new evidence, both for tomb architecture, and for the social organization and the radical changes that occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century BC, and led to the construction of the palaces (Fig. 1).

The present paper will present some preliminary results and thoughts on the role and the importance

<sup>4</sup> Maggidis 1994; Panagiotopoulos 2002; Papadatos 2005 with earlier bibliography.

<sup>5</sup> Soles 1992, 160–72; Demargne 1945; Van Effenterre 1980, in general on the Malia cemeteries, 229–52; for Chrysosolakkos in particular, 231, 241–5, figs. 316, 338–342, 344–349, 351; cf. also Baurain 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Seager 1912; Soles 1988, 41–113.

<sup>7</sup> Boyd 1905; Soles 1988, 1–35.

<sup>8</sup> Bosanquet 1901–1902; Bosanquet & Dawkins 1902–1903; Dawkins *et al.* 1904–1905; Dawkins 1903–1904; Soles 1988, 179–92.

<sup>9</sup> Platon 1967a, 190–4; 1967b, 113–5; Soles 1988, 195–200; Becker 1975.

<sup>10</sup> Demargne 1945; Van Effenterre & Van Effenterre 1963.

<sup>11</sup> Hall 1912.

<sup>12</sup> Seager 1916.

<sup>13</sup> Murphy 2011b, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Branigan 1998b, 22, suggested two annual festivals to celebrate the death and the resurrection of Ariadne, one in autumn (harvest) and the other in the spring.

<sup>15</sup> Branigan 1991; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1998b, 19–23; Relaki 2003; 2004; Sbonias 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Hamilakis 1998, 117.

<sup>17</sup> For the Petras cemetery, Tsipopoulou 2010b; in press a; in press b; Triantaphyllou 2009; 2010b; in press; this volume; Triantaphyllou *et al.* forthcoming; Betancourt this volume; Ferrence *et al.* this volume.

<sup>18</sup> For the complete bibliography on Petras, [www.petras-excavations.gr](http://www.petras-excavations.gr).

of the Petras cemetery, for the social coherence of the community, not only during its period of use, but, as was the case with other cemeteries of the same period,<sup>19</sup> in other – later – times as well. The central idea was the preservation of the memory of the ancestral burial place, and the respect to its highly symbolic character as a reference point for the community of the living diachronically. The interaction with the landscape played a critical role in this case, as it will be discussed below.

The area of Petras presents a remarkable continuity of occupation, starting in the Final Neolithic<sup>20</sup> and going down uninterrupted to the end of the Bronze Age, in LM IIIC. In EM IB the first settlement on the Kephala Hill was abandoned in favor of the lower and more easily accessible Hill I, where the palace was to be erected later.<sup>21</sup> The inhabitants of Petras at that time constructed a cemetery of house tombs, on the Kephala Hill, adjacent to the FN–EM I settlement, thus returning to the ancestral place, the area of the most ancient habitation of the living. The position of the cemetery on the large elevated plateau of the Kephala Hill is strategic for the whole of the Siteia Bay area, and for Petras in particular. The cemetery was destined, by its mere topography and its visibility to constitute a place of special significance diachronically. Furthermore, it was, at the time of its use, very clearly isolated from the every day life of the community of the living, as the Kephala Hill was not inhabited then.

All house tombs investigated to date belonged to elite groups of the society, as suggested by the architecture<sup>22</sup> (they have complex plans and occupy more than 60 m<sup>2</sup> each), as well as by the movable finds i.e., gold, and other metal jewelry and beauty implements,<sup>23</sup> seals,<sup>24</sup> imported objects and stone vases. House Tomb 2 in particular (Fig. 2), the only one fully excavated, excels all others for many reasons:

- Because of its position: it is situated at the south end of the large plateau in an area relatively protected from the strong winds and the erosion.<sup>25</sup>

- Because of its dating: House Tomb 2 shows clearly the transition from the group burials to the individual ones in clay containers, two larnakes and a pithos. These burials, in Rooms 1 and 3, directly



Fig. 2. Aerial photo of House Tomb 2.

accessible from the exterior, were among the latest deposited in the House Tomb, while Rooms 2, 4, and 5 contained only secondary burials.

- The third reason making House Tomb 2 unique is the finding of exceptional seals, some of them with hieroglyphic inscriptions,<sup>26</sup> that belong to the Protopalatial period and were undoubtedly connected with palatial administration. It is very characteristic that these seals were found very close to a broken larnax.

<sup>19</sup> Branigan 1970a, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Tsiopoulou this volume, Introduction; Papadatos this volume with bibliography.

<sup>21</sup> Tsiopoulou in press b.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. also Betancourt this volume.

<sup>23</sup> Ferrence *et al.* this volume.

<sup>24</sup> Krzyszkowska this volume

<sup>25</sup> It should be noted, however, that all the house tombs of the Petras cemetery belonged to elite groups and, as they are all placed on a large plateau, their position is not as significant as at Mochlos (cf. Murphy 2011c, 34) to mark pronounced social differences.

<sup>26</sup> Krzyszkowska this volume.

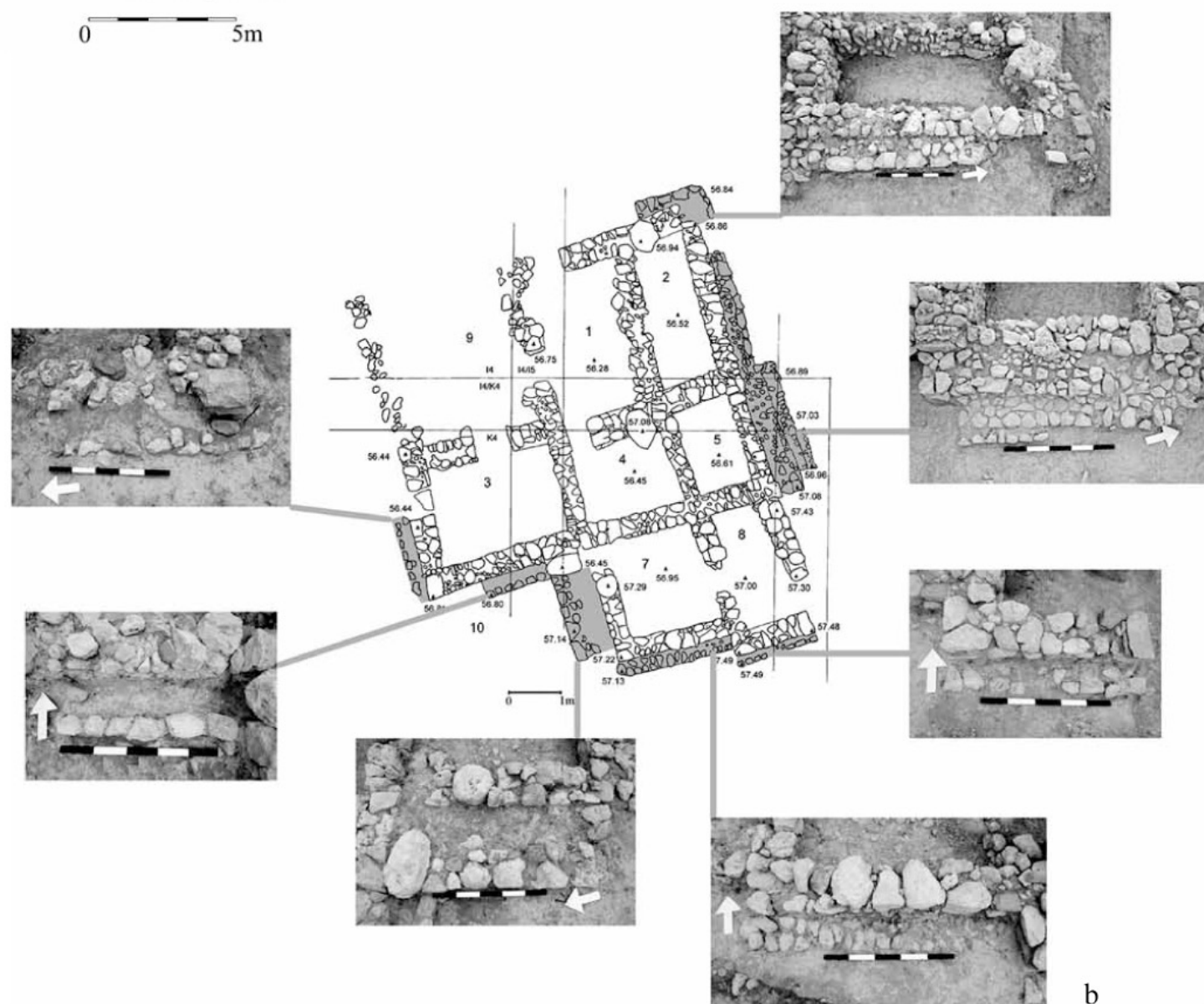


Fig. 3. a) House Tomb 2 and hypothetical reconstruction of open space around it; b) Plan of House Tomb 2 with the benches.

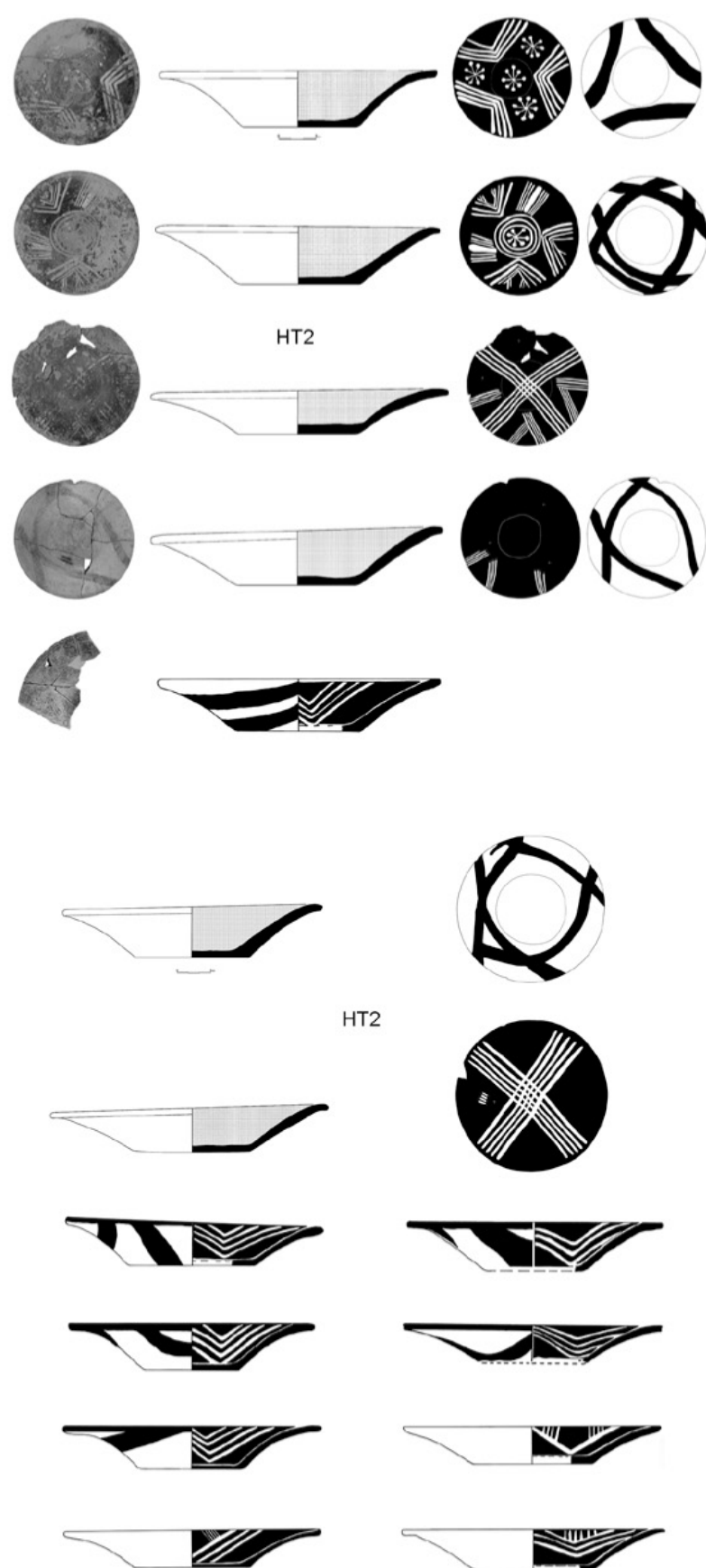


Fig. 4. Plates fallen in front of the benches and plates stored in Room 7 of House Tomb 2 (pictures not to scale).

The space around House Tomb 2 is organized to be used for ceremonies (Fig. 3a), at the time of the burials, or in other instances, as it is probable that this important funerary monument was a reference point for a group of the population larger than the one that had used it for the burials of its members. The preliminary analysis of the skeletal material by S. Triantaphyllou has shown that the social unit represented in the house tombs at Petras, was the family.<sup>27</sup> The same was probably true for other cemeteries of similar type in eastern Crete, such as that on Mochlos.<sup>28</sup> Yet both the architectural features connected with rituals, in House Tomb 2, such as the benches, as well as the movable finds, especially the pottery, show that they served a substantial number of people.

Built benches were constructed around all external rooms of the building (Fig. 3b), while there is no certainty about benches in other excavated tombs of the Petras cemetery. These benches are too low to seat people, and they were rather used for offerings. Although no offerings were found *in situ* on the benches, there were many fallen in front of them, especially plates. At the eastern part of the building, apparently for symbolic purposes, there are a very long bench which turns and continues after the north-eastern corner, and also a large stepped platform in the middle of the east side of the tomb. Close to this feature there were three complete and 12 fragmentary plates, while a further three were fallen in front of the long bench of the east side. Another three plates were found fallen in front of the wide bench at the west side of Room 7 (Fig. 4).

A free space, or courtyard, covering at least 230 m<sup>2</sup>, was arranged around House Tomb 2, on all four sides, and was initially defined by a peribolos, partially preserved today, which closes the whole cemetery to the east (Fig. 3a).<sup>29</sup> In this open space a large deposit of Protopalatial pottery has been excavated, including Kamares wares (Fig. 5a-e). This votive deposit (Votive Deposit 1) contained also animal bones and many marine shells, espe-

<sup>27</sup> Triantaphyllou in press.

<sup>28</sup> Murphy 2011b, 28–34, esp. 30.

<sup>29</sup> Also Tsiopoulou this volume, Introduction, fig. 13.

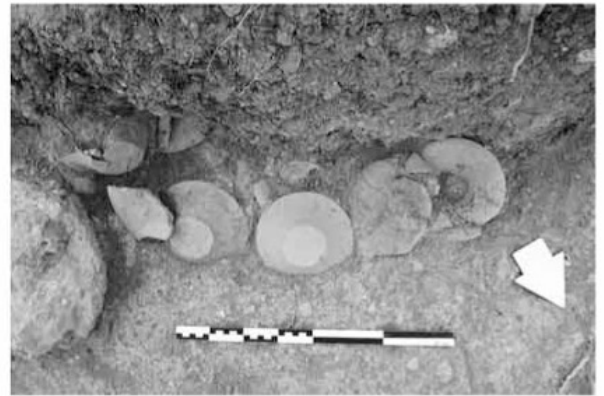
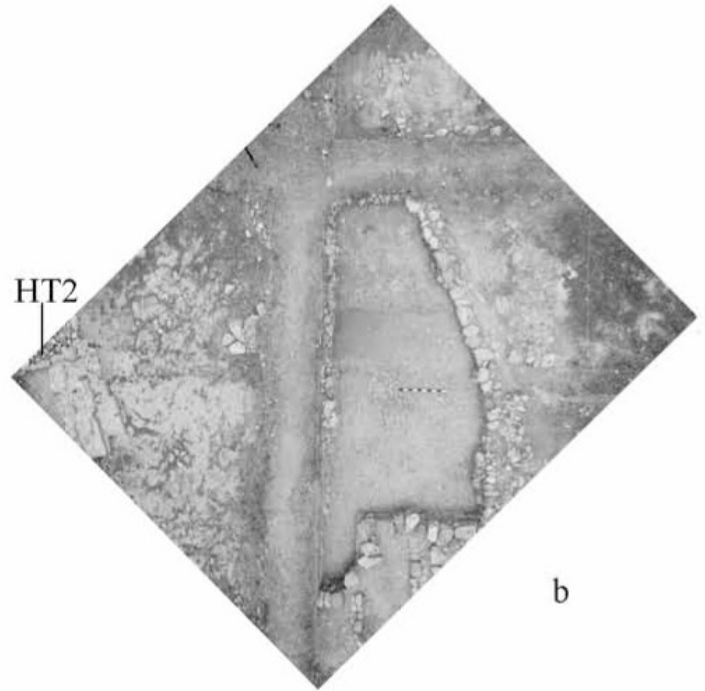
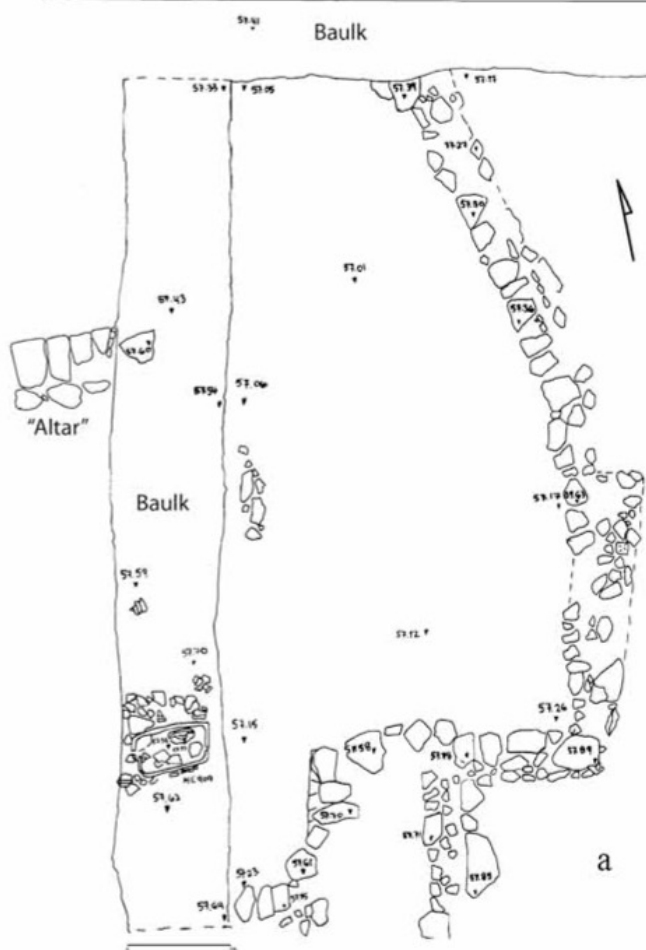


Fig. 5. a-b) Area of the Votive Deposit 1 connected with the House Tomb 2. Plan and view from the southwest of the peribolos and the "altar"; c-d) Excavation of the Votive Deposit 1 from the north; e) Pottery from the Votive Deposit 1.



Fig. 6. LM IIIC larnax in the southern part of the Votive Deposit 1 of House Tomb 2.

cially limpets, and to a lesser degree murexes. It is notable that there seems to be a consistency in the dimensions of several of the finds, for example the deep-water shells, and many of the open dishes or shallow bowls, which may imply the relevance of standardized rations in the ceremonies taking place in this area. Especially significant was the presence of lamps, most of them pedestalled probably suggesting nocturnal cult activities, although the possibility of being discarded after their use in the interior of the tombs should not be excluded.

## Discussion

Funerary rituals are of particular importance and well standardised throughout the world, practically in all human societies, because they are considered as a rite of passage between life and death. Their principal function is to facilitate the separation.<sup>30</sup> The importance of sharing food and drink during these ceremonies has been also stressed, as common eating and drinking is considered as a strong experience to be remembered and therefore important for the social cohesion. If this strong communal experience is combined with the emotions involved with death and separation the experience is further enhanced both on an individual and on a social level. Also, through these rituals “social forgetting” is achieved as the living need to realize that the dead person does not belong with them anymore and has lost his social persona. Thus the mortuary feasting as was rightly pointed out constitutes a mode

of generalized consumption “where food, bodies, persons and memories are consumed” at the same time.<sup>31</sup> Eating and digestion are diachronically and interculturally considered as a metaphor for death, and this explains their intimate connection with rites at the time of burial, or in honor of the dead. Hamilakis has explained the connection between the cultural logic of eating and that of death, both being related to control over bodies.<sup>32</sup>

In the southern part of this votive deposit, at a distance of approximately 4 m from the southeast corner of the tomb an almost complete LM IIIC larnax, broken but *in situ*, decorated with fish in the interior and octopuses on the exterior surfaces,<sup>33</sup> was revealed resting on a layer of flat stones (Figs. 5a, 6, 7). The larnax did not contain any human remains or other finds, and was located at a level considerably higher than the “floor” level of the votive deposit to the east. It is not easy to explain the presence of this later artifact, apparently not used for a burial, as it was so close to the LM IIIC settlement. Between the larnax and the east side of the tomb there is a rectangular, elevated, free standing construction, probably identifiable to the so-called “altars” connected with some of the Mesara tholoi (Figs. 5a, 7).<sup>34</sup>

Another important indication for ritual activities in connection with House Tomb 2 is the fact that two of its Rooms, 7 and 8, added at the east side to the original plan during a second architectural phase,<sup>35</sup> did not contain any burials, but were storage areas for dining equipment. These rooms are adjacent to the open space, the stepped platform and the peribolos, and have access to all of them. Also, as already mentioned, they are equipped with external benches. In Room 7 were stored 30 plates, and another two were found in Room 8, together with vessels of other types (Fig. 8).

<sup>30</sup> Murphy 1998, 32.

<sup>31</sup> Hamilakis 1998, 117.

<sup>32</sup> Hamilakis 1998, 115.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Tsipopoulou & Vagnetti 1997.

<sup>34</sup> Branigan 1970a, 101, 132, 134, 160; cf. pl. 13 for the “altar” outside the Kamilari tholos.

<sup>35</sup> This second phase, although very clear in the architecture, cannot be differentiated from the previous one on ceramic evidence.



Fig. 7. Larnax and "altar".



Fig. 9. Votive Deposit 2 from the west.

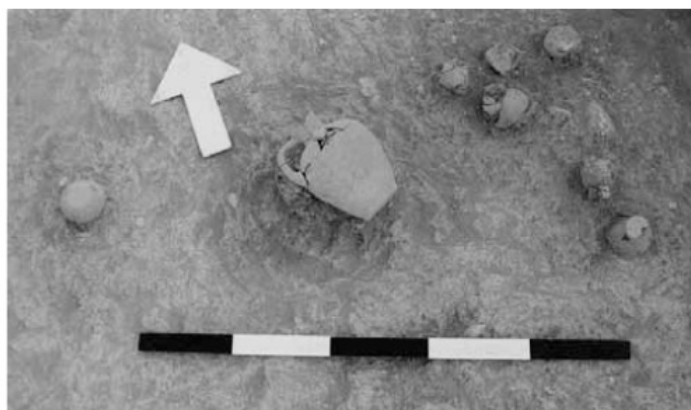


Fig. 10. Detail of Votive Deposit 2 from the south.

The 2011 campaign at the Petras cemetery produced significant evidence for the presence of at least one more similar votive deposit (Votive Deposit 2) at the north-eastern part of the cemetery, apparently connected to another House Tomb, not yet excavated. This deposit, itself not completely investigated as yet, contained a large amount of good quality Protopalatial pottery, hundreds of marine shells, and, for the first time, also fragments of clay figurines, very similar to those found at the peak sanctuaries of eastern Crete, two of which, Piskokephalo<sup>36</sup> and Prinias<sup>37</sup> are connected to Petras (Figs. 9–11).<sup>38</sup>

It is very significant that ritual activity at the cemetery continued during the Protopalatial peri-

<sup>36</sup> Platon 1952a.

<sup>37</sup> Davaras 1988 with earlier bibliography.

<sup>38</sup> For Prinias and its importance for the wider area of the Sit-eia Bay, see also Sofianou & Brogan this volume.

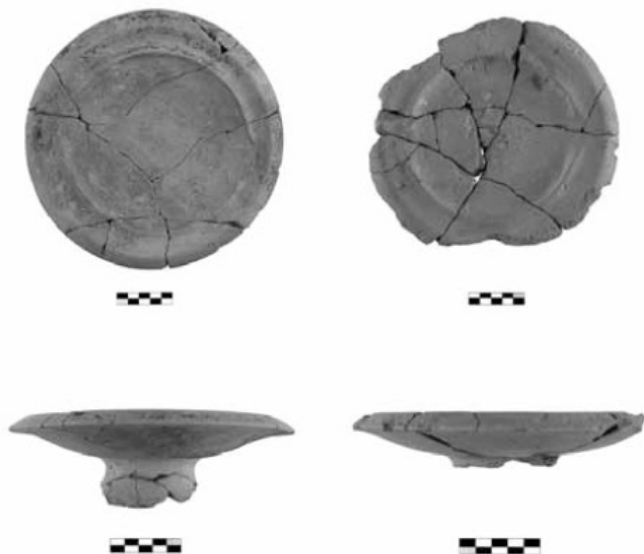


Fig. 8. Lamps from Room 7 of House Tomb 2.

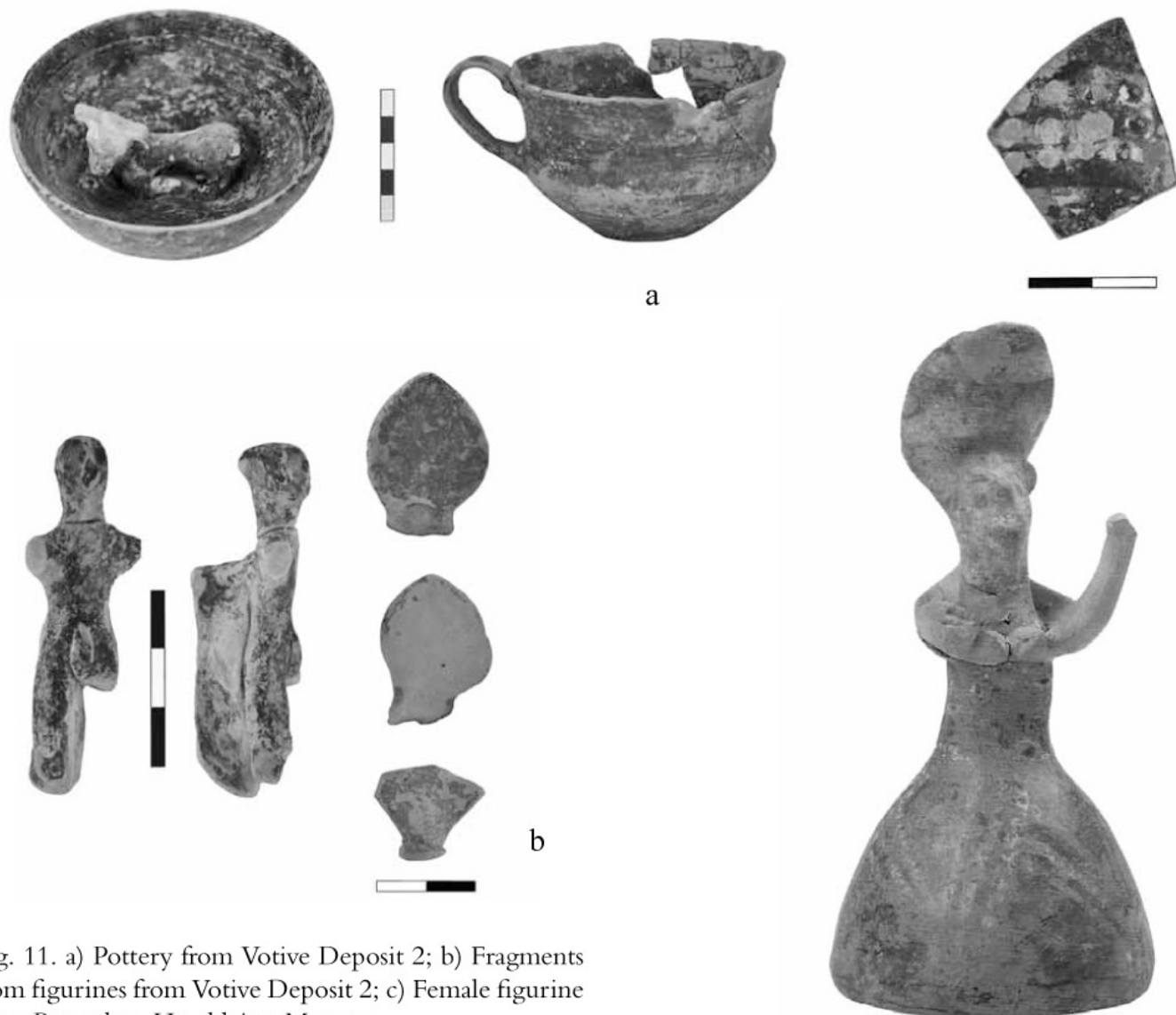


Fig. 11. a) Pottery from Votive Deposit 2; b) Fragments from figurines from Votive Deposit 2; c) Female figurine from Petsophas, Herakleion Museum.

od, when the Petras palace was already functioning as a center of communal gatherings aiming at consolidating the social coherence, and also as a center of state authority.<sup>39</sup>

Within the Petras cemetery, very close to the house tombs, a burial rock shelter was excavated, situated high on the west side of the Kephala Hill.<sup>40</sup> It has a wide entrance facing the settlement and the palace. The Rock Shelter contained a secondary deposit, probably coming from the cleaning of a particular House Tomb, on one occasion, as indicated by the inverted stratigraphy and the joins of the skeletal material.<sup>41</sup>

For the present discussion it is noteworthy the presence on the surface of the Rock Shelter of a clay LM IB high spouted jug, imitating a metal-

lic prototype,<sup>42</sup> accompanied by a conical cup (Fig. 12a-b). These two vases, of a clear ritual character, indicate that the place of the ancient at the time cemetery was always known to the inhabitants of

<sup>39</sup> For the Petras palace and its Protopalatial background, Tsiopoulou 2002.

<sup>40</sup> Tsiopoulou 2010b; 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Triantaphyllou this volume.

<sup>42</sup> This undecorated example, somewhat coarsely executed, has no exact parallels, at least in eastern Crete, among the published material, as far as I know, although its upper part (neck and rim) is very common in LM IB jugs, throughout Crete but combined with a much more slender body. For the globular depressed body of the Petras example, cf. an ewer from Khania, which has also an identical handle, Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2011, fig. 15a.



Fig. 12. a) Rock Shelter: LM IB beaked jug and conical cup as excavated from the west; b) Jug and conical cup.

Petras, even in the Neopalatial period, or that at that time the Rock Shelter was rediscovered. What is certain is that in Neopalatial times there has been at least once cult activity in the Rock Shelter, in honor of the ancestors.<sup>43</sup>

The LM I destructions had devastating effects on the settlement of Petras. Following the LM IA destruction a large part of the settlement was destroyed and never rebuilt. Also the palace, after the destruction, although it maintained its administrative and symbolic character, underwent various im-

portant modifications in its plan. Finally the LM IB destruction caused the abandonment of the palace, and probably of the settlement too. The libation in the Rock Shelter happened exactly in this unsettling period.

In a much later period, namely LM IIIC, a new settlement was established on the Kephala Hill.<sup>44</sup> In a period of insecurity, the inhabitants decided to leave Hill I, and move to a higher and more naturally protected place, as was a common practice throughout Crete. The choice of Kephala probably meant that they were still aware that there was the place of habitation of their ancestors, and therefore a sacred place. Even though this hypothesis cannot be proved, it is highly probable that the relative sense of security was not the only criterion for this choice. Furthermore, it is significant that they avoided placing the LM IIIC buildings of the settlement on top of the remains of the ancient tombs, which might have been still visible on the surface (Fig. 13). It seems that they respected the taboo of the avoidance of the contact with the dead, even though, at the same time, they sought their protection.

Despite the fact that no LM IIIC house was placed on the remains of the house tombs, there is an exception to this rule at the northern part of the cemetery. Partially on top of House Tomb 1 a large megaron was erected, accompanied by a well-built peribolos. It is quite possible that this megaron, had a special function, as the different plan and its isolation suggest, being possibly an early *temenos* (Fig. 13).

The megaron, measuring 8 x 5 m is not well preserved. The entrance is to the south, opposite the sea. It preserves a complete plan and three column bases in its interior. In front of its entrance there is a paved square platform of almost 4 m<sup>2</sup>. Although no evidence for a ritual function of this building is available, one should point out that no other build-

<sup>43</sup> Interestingly enough the two Neopalatial vases were found very close to an articulated leg, although this fact does not imply a burial in the LM I period, as first no other part of the same skeleton was preserved *in situ*, and together with the LM I vases there was a MM IB cup.

<sup>44</sup> Tsiopoulou 2011b.

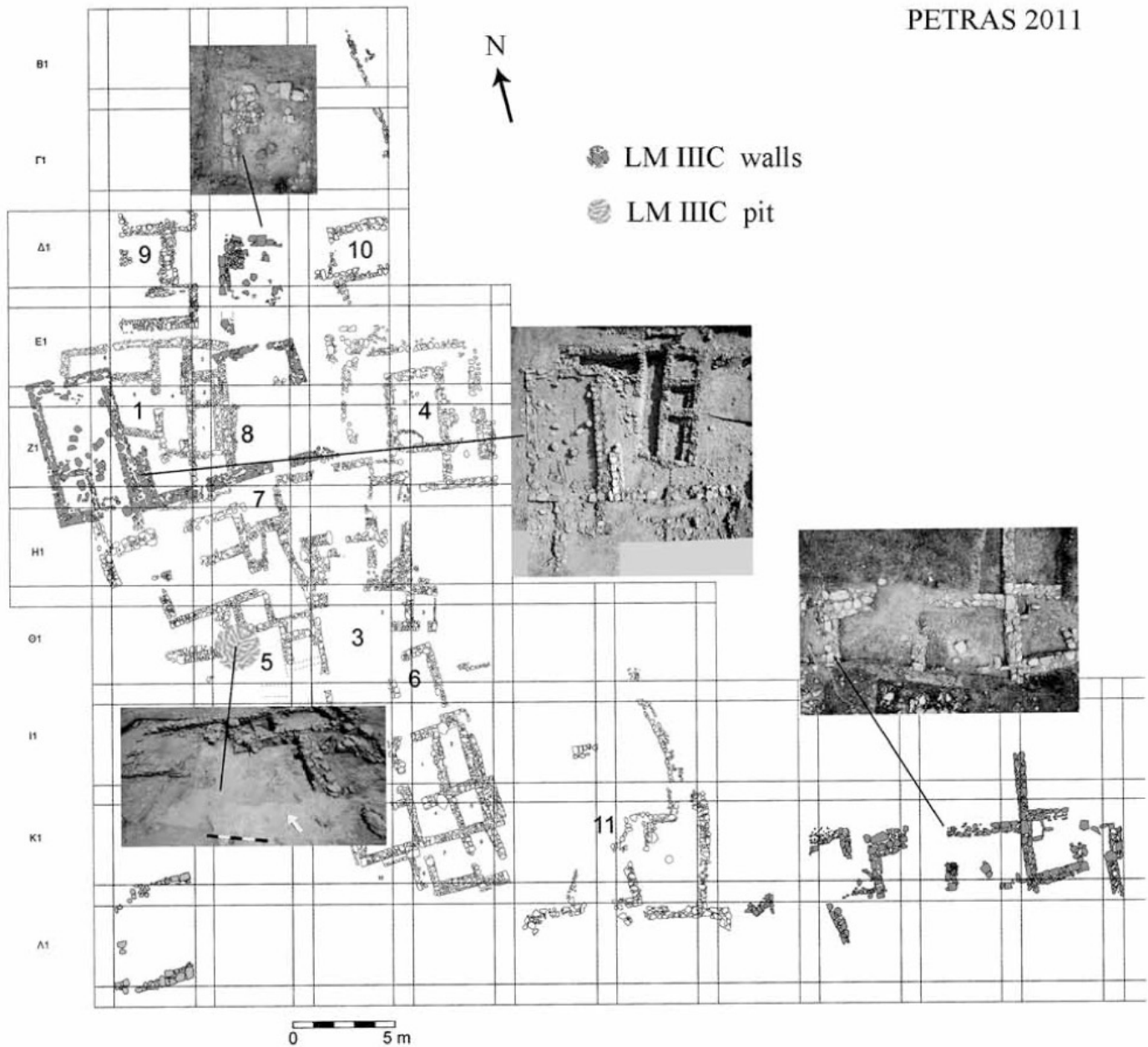


Fig. 13. LM IIIC remains: Megaron and peribolos, paved area, pit and houses.

ing of the settlement was of similar plan or size.<sup>45</sup> A second paved area, also LM IIIC in date, lies to the northeast of the megaron, but its excavation has not been completed in this area (Fig. 13). Megaroid plans in Crete indicate probably Mycenaean presence,<sup>46</sup> which was already identified at Petras. It should be noted here the presence of the large double fortification wall on the lower slope of Hill I,<sup>47</sup> and also the Mycenaean type fusiform loom weights, which were unknown in Crete prior to the arriving of people from the Mainland, as well as of the so-called cooking amphorae, again a typical

Mainland vessel type.<sup>48</sup> Finally, reference should be made to another particularly interesting LM IIIC

<sup>45</sup> At Halasmenos, at a settlement of the same period (middle LMIIIC), excavated by the author, there is a series of buildings with megaroid plans, that all seem to have had special functions, one of them being a sanctuary of the “Goddesses with Up-raised arms” and another three probably having served as meeting and dining places for parts of the community, Tsiopoulou 2009; 2011a.

<sup>46</sup> Tsiopoulou 2005b.

<sup>47</sup> Tsiopoulou 2005b, 312–4, figs. 7–9.

<sup>48</sup> Tsiopoulou 2005b, fig. 5.

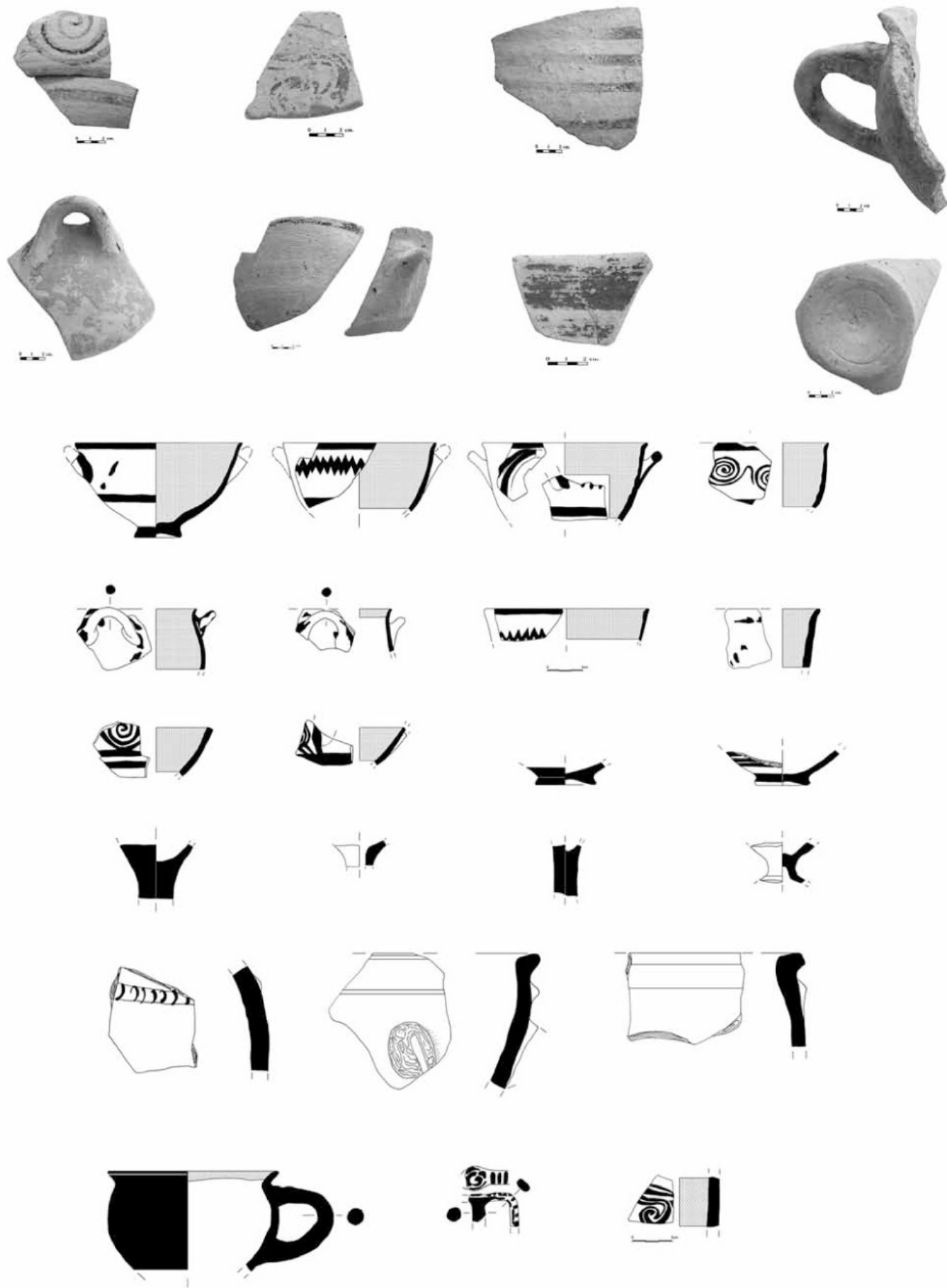


Fig. 14. LM IIIIC pottery from the pit.

deposit connected with the cemetery, namely a refuse pit, dug within House Tomb 5 (Fig. 13), partially cut in the soft bedrock, which contained a large quantity of LM IIIC pottery, especially plates, deep bowls and kylikes, in a layer of intense burning, accompanied by a large amount of sea shells and a bronze knife (Fig. 14). Similar pits are rather common in LM IIIC sites and are interpreted as the remains of symposia or ritual consumption of food and drinks. Published examples include pits from Syvrita<sup>49</sup> and Khamalevri in the Rethymnon area.<sup>50</sup> Also communal meals in open areas of the settlement are attested at Phaistos in the same period.<sup>51</sup> It is not easy to see the choice of the place of the deposition of the remains of communal meals within the ancient cemetery as a coincidence. The pit is closer to the megaron than to the houses of the LM IIIC settlement, and was situated almost in the middle of a large open (in LM IIIC) space (Fig. 13). It is quite probable that these data pertaining to the end of the Bronze Age, a period of social and political insecurity and movements of popula-

tion in the whole of the Aegean after the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial system, suggest that the inhabitants of Petras felt the necessity to pay respect to their ancestors, either real or imaginary ones.

The cemetery of Petras and the ceremonies involved with it over a period of almost 2,000 years would very well serve as an example to illustrate the social aspect of (collective) memory in structuring (elite) group identities, especially by recollection, reconstruction, and in some cases even oblivion.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Rocchetti 1994b, 242, figs. 12, 13; Metaxa-Prokopiou 1994; D'Agata 1997–2000.

<sup>50</sup> Andreadaki-Vlazaki & Papadopoulou 2005, 359, 361, 364, figs. 4–8, 19, 21–30, 34, 35, 37; 2007 for the analysis of the pottery.

<sup>51</sup> Borgna 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Hamilakis 1998, 116, 117.

# Discussion

**Haggis** Metaxia, thank you for that. I very much like this idea of locating both the cemetery with some cognizance of the earlier structures, and then the locating of the IIIC buildings. The IIIC pattern is, I think, really important, because we do not have enough resolution in these IIIC sites of the earlier stratigraphy in those areas. Vrontas is a very good example of what must have been either a built tomb or a Protopalatial house, that Building A was built on top of. It later incorporated a Minoan kernos. The problem with these IIIC sites is often the stratigraphy just as it is preserved, but I think there is a return to these Protopalatial sites. The recent work at Karphi is going to show this. They were actually selecting these Protopalatial settlements and linking themselves to them to build these large early IIIC buildings.

**MacGillivray** I would like to take Metaxia to jingle a little bit, that last primary burial in the larnax in HT 2, with the very fine, obviously very expensive hieroglyphic seals. Do those all go together? Could that be termed almost a royal burial?

**Tsipopoulou** No seal was found in the larnax. The larnax was used more than once, probably two times and in the latest use it was turned facing the wall. There was another burial, which we believe was initially in the larnax. It was just outside the larnax, and that burial was connected with the seals, the seals were found all around that burial, maybe they were all initially in the larnax.

**Vallianou** Metaxia, I would like to ask you if you have an idea, about the LM III parallel megara. There were three at Halasmenos, another three at Smari, and now another one with a peribolos at Petras. Why they were constructed in this fashion? Can you explain it?

**Tsipopoulou** About the megaron at Petras we have no evidence for its use, as it was almost on the surface. The megara at Halasmenos, which preserved their floor deposits are published in the *STEGA Conference* (Tsipopoulou 2011a, 333–47). I do not believe they were simple habitations. The analysis of their contents showed that they contained mostly vessels used for *symposia*, including a very large kylix with a capacity of 1.5 liters, and a few pithoid jars for short-term storage. There were no large pithoi, no tripod cooking pots, so I expressed the hypothesis that the megara at Halasmenos were used for food and drink consumption. About the Petras megaron, I do not know for sure.

**Macdonald** I am sorry, I do not know whether you are going to get to this later or not, but what precisely was found with the seals apart from the burial which was the second from last burial?

**Tsipopoulou** Nothing was found. Yiannis Papadatos maybe remembers more.

- Papadatos** The only thing I remember is a cornelian bead.
- Tsipopoulou** No pottery was associated with the seals.
- Papadatos** Pottery in the room yes, but not around the seals.

### *Greek abstract*

Το Προανακτορικό-πρώιμο Παλαιοανακτορικό νεκροταφείο του Πετρά Σητείας: ένα διαχρονικό σύμβολο κοινωνικής συνοχής

Η ανασκαφή του ασύλητου νεκροταφείου του Πετρά, που αποτελείται από τάφους-οικίες με σύνθετες κατόψεις, συνεχίζεται από το 2004. Έχουν εντοπισθεί πλήρως ή εν μέρει ανασκαφεί 11 τάφοι-οικίες. Παραμένουν άγνωστα ο τελικός αριθμός των τάφων και η συνολική έκταση του νεκροταφείου. Εκτός των ταφικών κτιρίων, ερευνήθηκε βραχοσκεπή με δευτερογενείς ταφές, πιθανότατα προερχόμενες από τον καθαρισμό ενός κτιρίου στην MM IB/IIA. Παρουσιάζονται τα δεδομένα διαχρονικής χρήσης του νεκροταφείου ως συμβόλου κοινωνικής συνοχής για τον πληθυσμό του Πετρά, πολλούς αιώνες μετά το τέλος της χρήσης του ως χώρος ταφών. Το Ταφικό Κτίριο 2 (TK 2), πλήρως ερευνημένο, είναι, μέχρι σήμερα, το σημαντικότερο για την αρχιτεκτονική, τα ευρήματα και τη χρονολόγησή του. Αποτελείται από εννέα χώρους και περιελάμβανε ταφές κατά χώραν, τόσο στο δάπεδο όσο και σε ταφικά αγγεία, καθώς και μεγάλο αριθμό ανακομιδών. Βρίσκεται στο νότιο άκρο του νεκροταφείου, κτίσθηκε στην ΠΜ III και χρησιμοποιήθηκε μέχρι την MM IIA (αρχή της Παλαιοανακτορικής για τον Πετρά). Το ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον της χρονολόγησης του TK 2, καθώς και τα σημαντικότερα κινητά ευρήματά του (μεγάλη ποσότητα κεραμικής, χρυσές ταινίες, μοναδικοί σφραγιδόλιθοι, καλοδιατηρημένο οστεολογικό υλικό), σε συνδυασμό με τις ενδείξεις οργανωμένης απόδοσης τιμών προς τους νεκρούς, που προσφέρουν τόσο η αρχιτεκτονική, όσο και ορισμένες κατηγορίες ευρημάτων, καταδεικνύουν το ρόλο του μνημείου αυτού στην κατανόηση της κοινωνικής εξέλιξης στην κρίσιμη περίοδο της μετάβασης προς την Παλαιοανακτορική. Στην βραχοσκεπή, εξάλλου, βρέθηκαν σχεδόν στην επιφάνεια τελετουργική πρόχους και κωνικό κύπελλο της YM IB, ένδειξη τελετουργίας την εποχή αυτή. Σημαντικό στοιχείο για την συνέχιση χρήσης του νεκροταφείου του Πετρά ως συμβολικού μνημείου κοινωνικής συνοχής για την κοινότητα, πολλούς αιώνες μετά το τέλος της χρήσης ως χώρος ταφής είναι ότι, στην YM IIIΓ περίοδο κτίσθηκε στο δυτικό του άκρο, εν μέρει πάνω από το TK 1, μεγάλο μεγαροειδές κτίριο, συνοδευόμενο από περίβολο. Το κτίριο αυτό πιθανότατα συνδεόταν με κάποιες μορφές τελετουργία ή απόδοση τιμής προς τους προγόνους, δηλώνοντας την αξιοσημείωτη συνέχεια του Πετρά, σε διάρκεια μεγαλύτερη των 2000 χρόνων.