

Connectivity Through Pottery Horizons

Tracing Interactions in Late Chalcolithic Cyprus

Research Question

What can a comparative study of red and/or black burnished wares from various sites across Cyprus tell us about regionalism, connectivity and transfer of technological knowledge in the Late Chalcolithic?

Theoretical Framework

This research's methodology is based on theoretical and methodological frameworks which argue that a systemic comparative analysis of different aspects of pottery production and technology, therefore of the *chaîne opératoire*, can indicate different ways and degrees of interactions between communities.

"Potting practices are learned behaviour, which means that they are inherited and generally reproduced under specific circumstances and within specific social networks" (Gosselain 2018, 7)



Methodology and Dataset

Publications and available datasets of red and/or black burnished pottery assemblages from five sites across Cyprus have been studied (Figure 1), namely:

- Local variants of the Red and Black Stroke Burnished Ware (RB/B) from Lemba-Lakkous, Kissonerga-Mosphilia (Figure 2) and Chlorakas-Palloures along the west coast
- Red Lustrous and Red and Black Lustrous Wares (RL and RBL) from Ambelikou-Agios Georghios in the northern part of the island
- Fabric A and Fabric E from Politiko-Kokkinorotsos in the central lowlands

A comparative study of the assemblages mentioned above has been conducted, comparing them in terms of clay procurement and processing, firing, surface treatment and decoration, and vessel shapes.



Results and Conclusions

Clay Procurement, Processing and Firing

Based on the fabric composition of the RB/B variants in the west coast, it seems plausible that potters from the three sites in question were using the same clay sources, located probably somewhere close by to the Ktima Lowlands. There they would meet, interact, and exchange tips and tricks about clay processing and firing.

On the other hand, the fabrics in question from *Ambelikou-Agios Georghios* and *Politiko-Kokkinorotsos* seem too different to be made of the same clay sources (Figure 3).



Surface Treatment and Decoration

The assemblages have red and/or black burnished surfaces, although the degree of burnishing may differ from site to site (Figure 4). Notably, relief decoration, mainly in knobs and short strokes, which is absent in previous pottery traditions of the island, is present in all the above assemblages.

Similarities in surface treatment and decoration leave no doubt that the RB/B variants of the west belong to the same pottery tradition, and that there was contact between all five sites.

The evidence point towards mediated interactions between potters across the island. In other words, potters would move around the island, or their finished products would "travel" to other sites. In that way they would encounter ceramics produced by other people, and mimic stylistic characteristics which could be replicated.



Vessel Forming and Shaping

There are three primary techniques of vessel forming in Chalcolithic Cyprus: vessels directly modelled from a lump of clay, vessels constructed with coiling, and vessels built with the help of other tools, like moulds (e.g. baskets).

When it comes to shapes, they occur mainly in: platters, storage jars, flasks with pointed bases, small spouted jars, hemibowls, deep bowls, spouted bowls, ovoid bowls, stemmed cups, triangular bowls, simple holemouth jars and spouted jars (Figure 5).



The results of this research indicate strong affinities between the vessel forming techniques and vessel shapes between *Lemba-Lakkous*, *Kissonerga-Mosphilia* and *Chlorakas-Palloures*. Therefore, the inhabitants of these sites were in long-term direct contacts. The same might apply for the inhabitants of *Ambelikou-Agios Georghios* and *Politiko-Kokkinorotsos*, but due to the nature of the assemblages which is comprised mainly of small sherds, no definitive conclusions can be drawn.

References

1. Map with the sites used in this research (created by Anna Lipp)
 2. RB/B vessels (after Bolger, D., and E. Peltenburg. 2014. Material and Social Transformations in 3rd Millennium Cyprus: Evidence of Ceramics, in J. Webb (ed.), *Structure, Measurement and Meaning. Studies on Prehistoric Cyprus in Honour of David Frankel*. Uppsala: Paul Åströms Förlag (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology 143), 187-197. Expanding and Shrinking Networks of Interaction: Cyprus c. 2200 BC, in H. Herald Meller, H. W. Arz, R. Jung and R. Ritsch (eds.), *2200 BC - A Climatic Breakdown as a Cause for the Collapse of the Old World?*. Halle: Landesmuseum Für Vorgeschichte, 131-148)
 - 3-4. Photographs of the dataset taken by Maria Hadjigavriel
 5. RB/B vessels (after: Peltenburg, E., 2018. The Entry of Cyprus into the Circum-Aegean World and the Growth of Regionalism on the Island, in M. F. Dietz S., Tankosić Ž. and Takaoğlu T. (eds), *Communities in Transition: The Circum-Aegean Later Neolithic Stages (5000/4800-3200/3000 BC)*. Athens: Danish Institute at Athens, 458-467.)
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