

Chapter 43

A Late Mycenaean Journey from Thera to Naxos: the Cyclades in the Twelfth Century BC

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Post-eruption Thera: Monolithos

The question of the reinhabitation of Thera after the cataclysmic eruption of Late Bronze I is of interest not only for the history of the settlement of the island, but also for assessment of the effects of the eruption... How does any such inhabitation relate to contemporary settlement elsewhere in the Aegean islands? (Doumas & Warren 1979, 232).

This is how Christos Doumas and Peter Warren commence their short article in the 1979 *Athens Annals of Archaeology*, where they publish some Mycenaean surface sherds from Monolithos, and suggest an important LC III settlement on the site.

Monolithos is an isolated crag of limestone and the only rocky promontory on the east coast of post-eruption Thera. It dominates the fertile plain that extends from the massive rock of Ancient Thera to the north, forming the central part of the island (Fig. 43.1).



Figure 43.1. Thera, the Monolithos hill seen from the west (1968).
(Photograph: S. Marinatos.)

Traces of walls were visible in the 1970s on the north and west slopes indicating that the LH III settlement extended to the slopes 'up to one hundred meters from the rock' (Doumas & Warren 1979, 234).

The sherds collected by the two authors were dated to the LH IIIB and LH IIIC periods; Elizabeth French, however, considered that none of the published sherds had to be earlier than LH IIIC (Doumas & Warren 1979, 235). Doumas and Warren (1979, 236) assumed that the foundation of the settlement may have occurred in the fourteenth century BC, but pottery dated the main habitation period of the site to the twelfth century BC. These Mycenaean sherds are still the only post-eruption discoveries from Thera, and Monolithos is the only known Mycenaean site on the island. No Mycenaean pottery is attested from the naturally fortified settlement of Ancient Thera at Mesa Vouno, which was inhabited in Geometric times.

In 2003, the published surface pottery from Monolithos was located in the Museum of Prehistoric Thera and it was examined thanks to the kind permission of Mr. Charalambos Sigalas (Figs. 43.2, 43.3). Linear style is predominant with the majority of sherds belonging to closed shapes (mostly hydrofora (jugs, hydriai, lekythoi and amphorai)) and a few good quality, pictorial sherds from stirrup and piriform jars that seem imported. The LH IIIC Middle outlined rosette motif within a dotted circle (Fig. 43.3:2) recalls the style of the East Aegean Koine (Mountjoy 1999, 1126–7, 1134 fig. 464.19) but there are also good parallels from Melos (Mountjoy 1999, 925 figs. 377.193, 927, 379.199). The bird with the multi-looped body (Fig. 43.3:1) has many LH IIIC Middle and Late parallels in



Figure 43.2. *Thera, Monolithos: Mycenaean surface pottery.*



Figure 43.3. *Thera, Monolithos: Mycenaean surface pottery.*

the Aegean and stylistically it might be attributed to several regional workshops. Shapes include monochrome and reserved skyphoi, one handled skyphoi, kylikes and tripod cooking pots (Fig. 43.2). The clay of most of the decorated pots is buff orange to brown, well-fired, and most probably not local.

There are more surface sherds from Monolithos to be studied in the future (Vlachopoulos 2007a), but at present the evidence clearly shows that habitation at Monolithos dates to the LH IIIC Early-Middle period, though some earlier activity at the site cannot be excluded. There are a few Geometric sherds from the site, but they cannot be used to demonstrate continuity from the Mycenaean period.

The topography of the unexcavated settlement and the surface pottery from the site do not allow us to draw conclusions about the expansion and the

character of the settlement. However, surface pottery shows that systematic occupation in the area took place at the turn of the thirteenth to the twelfth centuries BC. Does this date simply correspond to the moment when Thera was fertile enough to support permanent occupation again (as Doumas & Warren (1979) suggested), or correlate with a specific historic event, such as the post-palatial expansion of mainland populations to the southeast and/or the trade activity of the so-called Mycenaean in the Aegean?

The settlement of Monolithos was characterized by Doumas and Warren (1979, 236) as 'interesting and significant' with 'Thera becoming yet another of the important Aegean islands, along with Euboea, Kea, Melos, Paros and Naxos, with thriving, coastal settlement, obviously peaceful, in this century. No upheavals or marauders would seem to have been disturbing the Aegean islands at this time, at least not for the greater part of the twelfth century'. Based on this suggestion, and considering that it reflects the general image of the last Mycenaean century in the Aegean some 25 years of scholarship later, a brief synthesis will be attempted in this paper of the cultural identity of the Cyclades in the LH IIIC period.

The last Mycenaean century in the Cyclades is best attested at the partly excavated settlements of Ayia Irini on Kea, Koukounaries on Paros, Phylakopi on Melos and Ayios Andreas on Siphnos; however, the only island that has provided large amounts of material from a major settlement (Grotta) and its cemeteries (Aplomata, Kamini), and precious chronological synchronisms with the other insular centres of the Aegean, is Naxos, where most of this paper's attention will be focused.

The LH IIIC period in Naxos

The LH IIIC settlement along the coastline of Grotta and its cemeteries on the adjacent hills of Aplomata and Kamini reveal that an important urban centre flourished on Naxos during the twelfth and at the turn of the eleventh century BC, with harbour installations and other public works, secure defences, a defined

area of settlement, organized workshops and delimited cemeteries (Vlachopoulos 1999c; Lambrinoudakis & Philaniotou-Hadjianastasiou 2001).

The material from the tombs has been completely presented (Kardara 1977; Vlachopoulos 2006) and the first results from the study of the LH IIIC settlement of Grotta have also been presented (Vlachopoulos 2003a,c). A detailed synthesis of the material from Naxos has been proposed (Vlachopoulos 2003a) and the term 'Grotta Phase' introduced for the stylistically and chronologically homogeneous pottery from the settlement and that from the adjacent cemeteries, which dates to the LHIIIC Middle and Late periods. Most of the major points of this settlement study are presented here with selected pictures of the material.

The settlement of Grotta

The settlement occupies the western part of Grotta on the north coast of Naxos and, if the submerged sector is taken into account, the town covered an area of some 35,000 m². The islet of Palatia to the west and a torrent channel to the east formed its natural boundaries. The adjacent hills of Aplomata and Kamini were used as organized cemeteries of chamber tombs (Fig. 43.4).

The major obstacles that faced the excavators N. Kontoleon and V. Lambrinoudakis at Grotta were the thick, disturbed deposits, the influx of seawater and the absence of stratified horizons. Several areas along the modern coastline have been investigated since 1950. The first stratified areas of the LH IIIC settlement were excavated from 1978 onwards when the Geometric and Late Mycenaean horizons were explored as scrupulously as possible. A short distance to the south of Grotta, in Metropolis Square, excavation brought to light part of the eastern section of the LH IIIC mudbrick fortification wall (Fig. 43.5), which at that point enclosed a complex cluster of spaces used for various craft activities, including potting (Lambrinoudakis 1999; Lambrinoudakis & Philaniotou-Hadjianastasiou 2001, 160 figs. 2, 3; Vlachopoulos 1999c, fig. 3).



Figure 43.4. Naxos: the coast of Grotta with the islet of Palatia (lower arrow), the Aplomata cemetery (middle arrow) and the Kamini cemetery (upper arrow).



Figure 43.5. Naxos, Grotta: Metropolis Square. The LH IIIC mudbrick fortification wall from the east. (Courtesy: V. Lambrinoudakis.)

The first period of LBA habitation at Grotta can be dated to LC II, and the pottery, much of which is imported, seems to have been more Mycenaean than Minoan in character (Cosmopoulos 1998; 2004). In the LH IIIA period the settlement (Town I) flourished, with characteristic rectangular architecture. It declined during LH IIIB1, and was virtually abandoned in LH IIIB2, possibly after an earthquake, which caused a flood.

A few years later, another settlement (Town II) was built on top of the old one but with a different

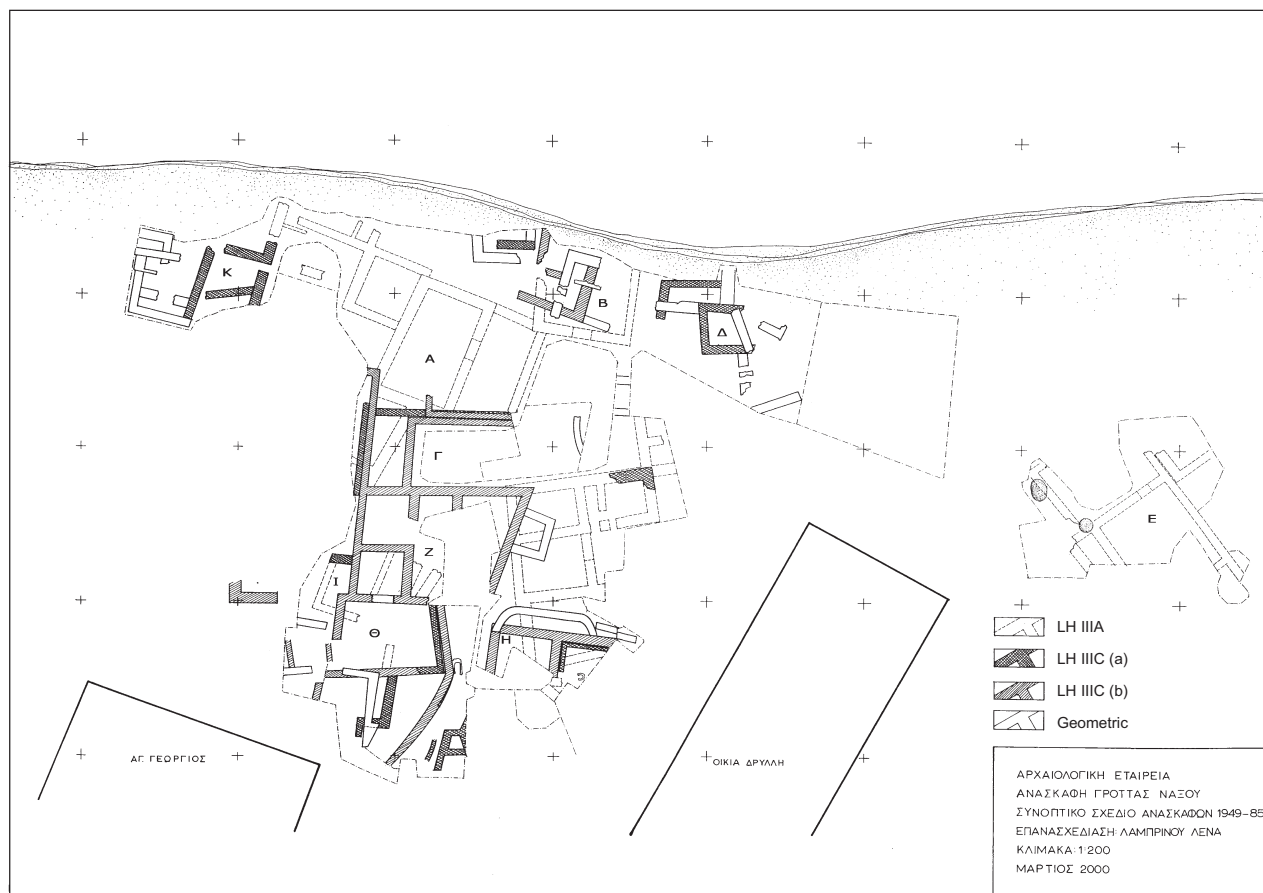


Figure 43.6. *Naxos: the excavated area at Grotta with the architectural phases of Town I (LH IIIA) and Town II (LH IIIC).*

orientation (Fig. 43.6). Scant finds of LH IIIC Early pottery date the first phase of habitation of this town, which was probably very restricted in area and located mainly on the islet of Palatia. The new settlement was well-established by the LH IIIC Middle developed phase and it continued until the LH IIIC Late period.

The houses in Town II were built close together, with party walls. Bays in outside walls were widely used, though the continuous addition of spaces makes it difficult to distinguish their outlines. Outstanding among the structures of Town II in the triangular nucleus of Grotta are the large megaroid building Γ and the complex of houses Ζ, Η, Θ, Ι with kitchen and storage facilities. Although the large megaroid building Ε belonged to Town I, in the LH IIIC period a sacrificial bothros for offerings was dug along the length of one of its walls and a hearth was constructed (Vlachopoulos 2003c, 496, figs. 4–6).

Two architectural phases can be distinguished in LH IIIC Grotta (Town II), which are linked by

the addition of spaces, the elimination of floors and creation of new ones. However, detailed study of the pottery has shown that there is barely any differentiation in shapes and decoration, and the pottery groups recovered from the successive floors of the houses are characterized by uniformity (Vlachopoulos 2003a, figs. 3a, b). Similar pottery is also found in the chamber tombs, which confirms the contemporary use of the settlement and the cemeteries during LH IIIC Middle and Late, a period that we have dubbed the 'Grotta Phase' (Vlachopoulos 2003a).

The town was abandoned at the end of the LH IIIC for reasons unknown. There are no signs of conflagration or earthquake, but the presence of sand in some of the stratified levels of the houses suggests that there was a rise in sea level at this time and that the settlement was flooded.

The direct succession of the Protogeometric level over the LH IIIC horizon demonstrates clearly that no Submycenaean phase existed there, most probably because the 'Grotta Phase' overlaps the Submycenaean

period (or pottery style?) of the Greek mainland. During the succeeding Protogeometric period the area of the LH IIIC town was used as a cemetery, and on one tomb a LH IIIC hydria was used as the *sema* (Lambrianoudakis & Philaniotou-Hadjianastasiou 2001, 167).

The cemeteries

The chamber tomb cemeteries on the hills of Aplomata and Kamini are the only complete LH IIIC burial complexes in the Cyclades (Kardara 1977; Vlachopoulos 2006). At Aplomata, three chamber tombs have been revealed on the edge of the present cliff and a fourth further away on the south flank of the hillock (Hadjianastasiou 1996b). In the 'tumulus-like earth mound' at Kamini a cluster of four chamber tombs are cut in a radial arrangement on the slopes of the mound, facing towards the sea.

The distance of around 500 m between the two hills indicates that the picture in Naxos is not of a single extensive cemetery but of graves cut in clusters, quite possibly belonging to clans. There are no poor inhumation burials or burials without grave goods. The dead were accompanied by rich funerary offerings such as pictorial pottery, weapons, jewellery, seals and tools. Of interest are the three warrior burials, one of which was made in a thick layer of animal pyres on a flat, open-air area of Kamini, and the burial pit of a child inhumed separately at the top of the mound.

The four gold plaques from the last burial, with a representation of a child (Fig. 43.7), are the only ones known in the Aegean, and their earliness in relation to the Cypriot examples of the eleventh century BC depicting Astarte makes these plaques unique, apparently manufactured independently of any known centre of production (Vlachopoulos 2003b, 570 no. 1149). Bucrania and lions of sheet gold (Fig. 43.8) originally had a perishable core. The symbolic dimension of these subjects is perhaps related to the social status or office of the dead in Naxos.

In general, items of jewellery from Naxos are clearly creations of an insular area, possibly local, that owe their originality to the combination of influences from Oriental models and the Mycenaean artistic tradition. Among the small finds from the cemeteries, an arched fibula and two Naue II swords (Vlachopoulos 1999c, 308 fig. 16) confirm that these types were completely established in Naxos during the LH IIIC Middle period.

Small assemblages of pottery found in pits outside the graves have been interpreted as offerings; these vessels are mainly strainer hydrias, outstanding among which is one with a representation of dancers (Vlachopoulos 1995, 54 figs. 94, 95; 1999b, 81, fig. 1; 1999c, 307, fig. 14).



Figure 43.7. Naxos, Kamini: four gold sheet plaques from the child burial E. Naxos Museum (NM) 3565–8.

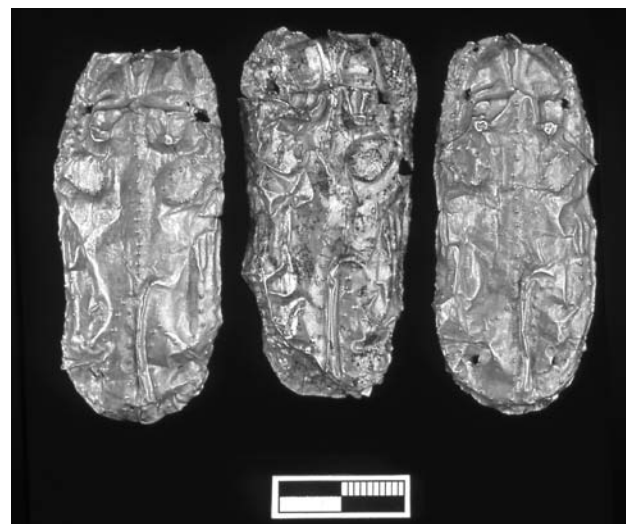
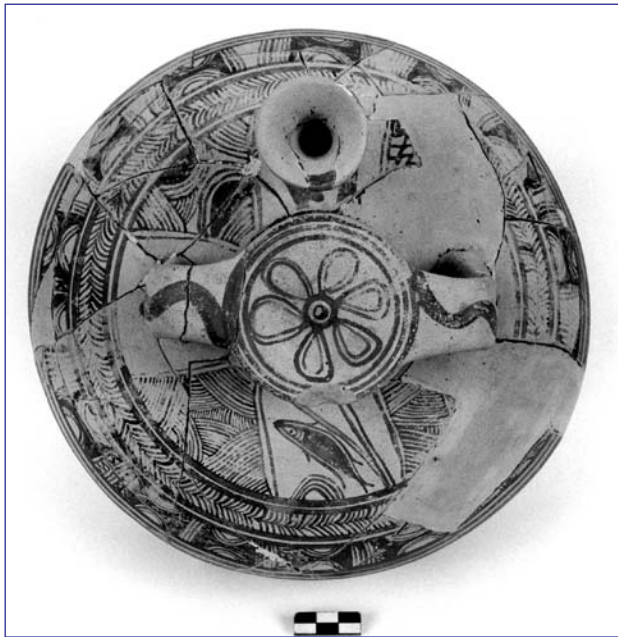


Figure 43.8. Naxos, Aplomata: three gold sheet lions from chamber tomb A. NM 967–9.



a



b

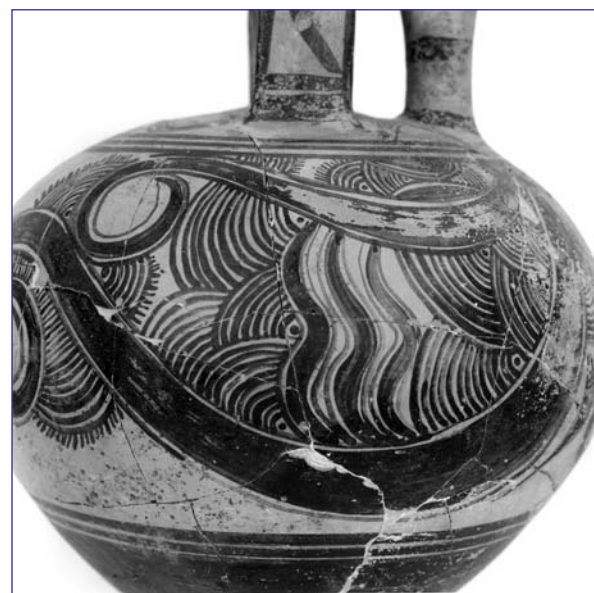


Figure 43.9. *Naxos, Aplomata: LH IIIC Middle stirrup jar of the Naxian close style from chamber tomb A. NM 942.*

Figure 43.10a–c. *Naxos, Kamini: LH IIIC Middle stirrup jar of the Naxian octopus-close style from the warrior burial above chamber tomb Δ. NM 1750.*

c



Nine graves contained some 330 vases, all of them dated to the 'Grotta Phase'. The Aplomata cemetery seems to be earlier, beginning in the LH IIIC Middle developed and with its main use in the LH IIIC Middle advanced period (Fig. 43.9), while Kamini overlaps in LH IIIC Middle advanced (Figs. 43.10a–c) and has its final phase in the LH IIIC Late period.

At the time the last burial was made at Kamini, the local octopus style was still at its zenith, even though the first signs of repetition fatigue had already appeared (Figs. 43.11a, b). The linear style had succeeded the gradual disintegration of the close style and shapes were beginning to lose their harmony. Some features of this phase are also encountered in LH IIIC Late pottery of the Argolid, Lefkandi, the Kerameikos and Perati.

LH IIIC pottery on Naxos

There are 36 shapes in the repertoire of LH IIIC pottery from the settlement of Grotta, 26 of which are also found in the cemeteries (Vlachopoulos 2006, ch. 2, 9; 1999c; Mountjoy 1999, 937–61). Only the naturalistically modelled duck vase (Vlachopoulos 1999c, fig. 11; 2003b, 289, no. 245) has no parallels in the settlement.

The strong Cycladic tradition of naturalism constitutes the most important feature of Naxian pottery, including human figures and octopus, fish, bird, quadruped and floral motifs in its pictorial repertoire. Linear motifs idiosyncratic to Naxos include outlined solid semi-circles, almonds and triangles, elaborate triangles and concentric arcs with eye fill, antithetic tongues and antithetic spirals.

The stirrup jar (FS 175) is the most frequent shape from the Naxos tombs, representing 27 per cent of the pottery. 60 per cent of the stirrup jars from Kamini are in the octopus style, the highest percentage known to date in the Aegean. The work of least five individual, local vase-painters has been identified (Fig. 43.12a, b), and a larger number of vase groups came from the same workshops. The recognition of painters and the identification of workshop ensembles amongst the pictorial pottery helps us to recognize the iconographic idiom of the period and to establish stylistic criteria for relative dating when stratigraphic evidence from the tombs is lacking or unhelpful. Thanks to study of the stratified material from the settlement, we are able to say that the continuum of pottery in the LH IIIC Naxian pictorial style can be reconstructed to a satisfactory degree (Figs. 43.13a, b).

Figure 43.12. (on right) Naxos, Kamini: LH IIIC Middle 'twin' stirrup jars of the Naxian octopus-close style by the 'tentacles painter' from chamber tomb A. (a) NM 1805, (b) NM 1806.

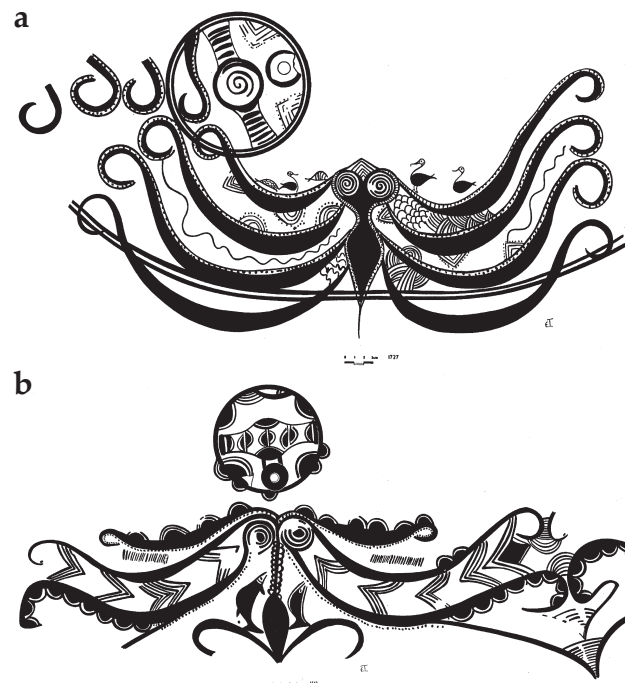


Figure 43.11. Naxos, Kamini: LH IIIC Middle stirrup jar of the Naxian octopus style (a) from chamber tomb A. NM 1727, (b) from the warrior burial above chamber tomb A. NM 1712.



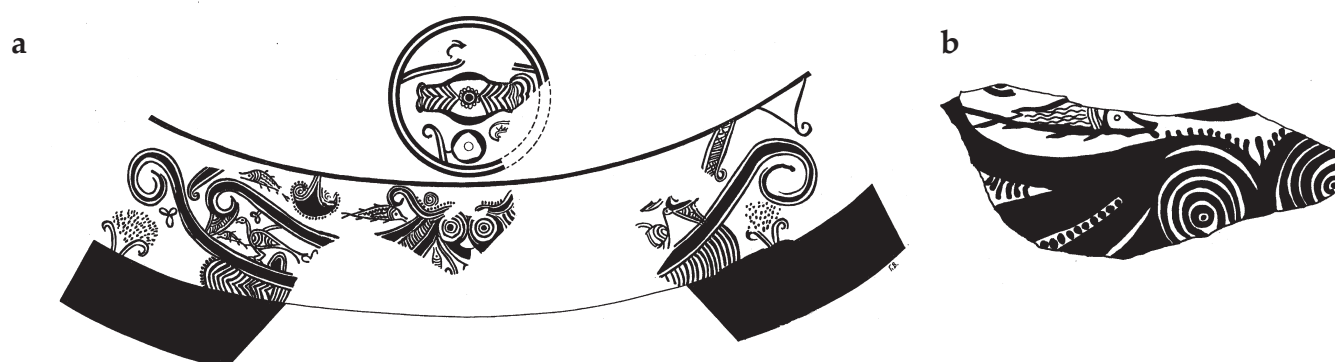


Figure 43.13. *Naxos: LH IIIC Middle octopus style stirrup jars by the 'Grotta painter' (a) Kamini, outside the chamber tombs. NM 1858, (b) Grotta, House Z (Π 195-85).*



Figure 43.14. *Naxos, Aplomata: LH IIIC Middle stirrup jars of the Attic octopus-close style from chamber tomb A. NM 949, 934.*

Imported vases by painters known from Attica (Fig. 43.14) and eastern Crete (Fig. 43.15) were also identified, enabling us to define the time frame for the distribution of octopus style stirrup jars from the two most active exporting centres, and their contemporaneity with Naxos and Rhodes (Vlachopoulos 2006, ch. 7). These LH IIIC stirrup jars are usually large and the technology of their manufacture is advanced. They are the vessel *par excellence* that was exported in the twelfth century, dependent upon the reputation and artistic standing of the workshops producing them. There are also some close style and linear style stirrup

jars imported from Crete (Vlachopoulos 2003a, 223, fig. 6), Attica (Vlachopoulos 2003c, 497, fig. 6), Argolid, Laconia, Kos and other non-identifiable workshops (Vlachopoulos 2006, ch. 7).

The strainer hydria (FS 157) is the second most characteristic shape from Naxos. The chthonic, modelled snakes on the shoulders of the hydrias (Fig. 43.16) are mainly encountered in the cemeteries (Kardara 1977, 32, pls. 39–42), where there is a second important pictorial scene depicting a group of fishermen hauling in their net (Hadjianastasiou 1996b; Vlachopoulos 1999b, 81 fig. 2).

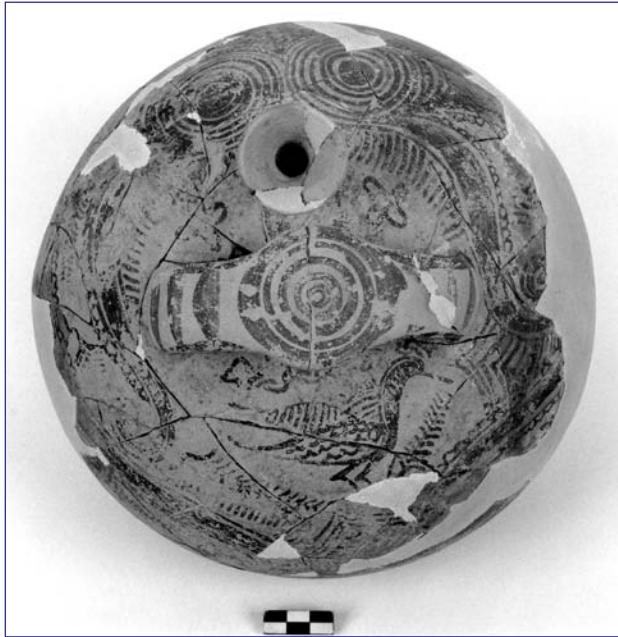


Figure 43.15. *Naxos, Aplomata: LM IIIC Middle stirrup jar of the Eastern Crete octopus-close style from chamber tomb B. NM 914.*



Figure 43.16. *Naxos, Aplomata: LH IIIC Middle strainer hydria from chamber tomb B. NM 913.*

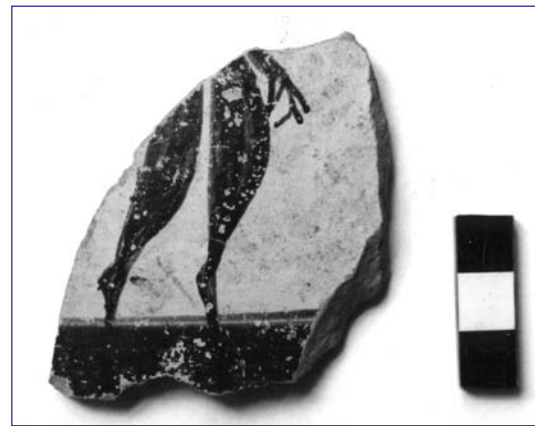
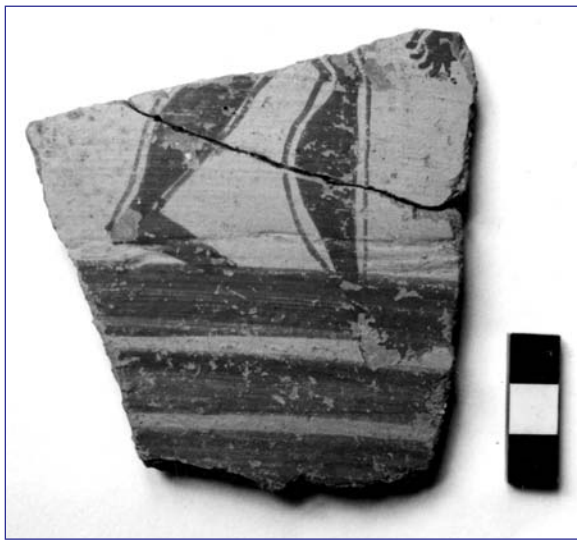


Figure 43.17. *Naxos, Grotta: LH IIIC Middle krater sherds depicting male figures.*

The most common shape in the settlement is the monochrome deep bowl (FS 284–5), examples of which display considerable uniformity in fabric and dimensions (Mountjoy 1999, 959 figs. 391.65–70; Vlachopoulos 2003a, 224, fig. 7; 2003c, 497, fig. 7). The second most frequent shape is the one-handed, conical bowl (FS 242), with no special features of shape or decoration (Vlachopoulos 2003a, 224, figs. 3a, b, 8). On Naxos, these most probably replaced kylikes (FS 267), which are infrequent and mostly carinated and unpainted (Vlachopoulos 2003a, figs. 3a, b).

Kraters (FS 282) are absent from the tombs but are among the most common of shapes in the settlement (Vlachopoulos 2003a, 224, figs. 9–11; 2003c, 497, fig. 9, 10, 20, 23, 24). The ring-base type, of medium and large dimensions, dominates, with the same type of linear decoration as on Group A deep bowls but with densely arranged motifs. A few kraters from the settlement depict riders and men in procession (Figs. 43.17a, b), while the large ‘Grotta krater’, which was found in the pottery workshop of Metropolis Square (Vlachopoulos 1999b), depicts a human figure standing upright on the back of



Figure 43.18. *Naxos, Metropolis Square: the LH IIC Middle 'Grotta krater' from the pottery workshop.*



Figure 43.19. *Naxos, Aplomata: LH IIC Middle octopus style stirrup jar by the 'triglyphs painter' from chamber tomb A. NM 943.*

the horse and holding its bridle (Figs. 43.18). This vase is a fine example of the Naxian workshop, belonging to the circle of production of the so-called 'triglyphs painter', whose hand has already been identified on stirrup jars from the cemeteries (Fig. 43.19).



Figure 43.20. *Naxos, Grotta: LH IIC Middle mug sherd depicting a running lion.*

Mugs (FS 226) from the settlement are large-bodied, with linear and pictorial motifs such as the octopus (Vlachopoulos 2003a, 226, fig. 12), the running lion with monochrome body and incised outline (Fig. 43.20), and a rare representation of a duel

between male figures holding a javelin and a spear (Fig. 43.21).

The two or three handled amphora and amphoriskos (FS 58, 59, 61) are common shapes in the tombs but not in the settlement (Mountjoy 1999, 942–4, figs. 383–5; Vlachopoulos 2006, ch. 2). They appear in several versions, and the large ones may have replaced the belly-handled amphora on Naxos.

Also of interest are the alabastra (FS 98, 99), the feeding bottles (FS 162), the large-bodied flasks (FS 186), the large-bodied spouted cups (FS 249; Vlachopoulos 2003c, 497 fig. 14), the kalathoi (FS 291; Vlachopoulos 2003c, 497 fig. 15γ), the shallow angular bowls (FS 295; Vlachopoulos 2003c, 497 fig. 15α–β), the kernoi (FS 330, 331) and the *hydrophora* (jugs, hydriai, lekythoi and amphorai). From the settlement there are also bathtubs (*asaminthoi*) (Vlachopoulos 2003c, 497 fig. 18) and a large variety of pithoi and tripod cooking pots.

Kea, Siphnos, Kimolos, Paros and Melos versus Naxos: synchronisms and heterochronisms in the LH IIIC Cyclades

The privileged position of Naxos on the major sea lanes of the Aegean and its traditional self-sufficiency facilitated the creation and maintenance of a dense network of contacts, extending to mainland Greece and Crete, through which merchandise, new ideas and perhaps new inhabitants reached the island.

By definition, the LH IIIC Middle and Late ‘Grotta Phase’ pottery of Naxos has parallels on both the Greek mainland and Crete, but not in the Cyclades (Vlachopoulos 2003a). It has been shown that there are no chronological synchronisms with Naxos on the islands, where the picture of material culture is not uniform and the diversity of the local pottery styles does not yet allow the establishment of a reliable ceramic sequence.

The chronological period which corresponds with the ‘Grotta Phase’ of Naxos was a time of prosperity (although not uniformity) for many old and new sites on the Greek mainland and Crete. In the Dodecanese, Kos played a major role, analogous to that of Rhodes in the previous period (LH IIIC Early/Middle advanced) and the neighbouring island of Kalymnos seems to have enjoyed considerable prosperity as well. In the Cyclades, the ‘Grotta Phase’ is largely absent on the other islands, restricted to single pots or sherds from Kea, Melos, Kimolos and Thera.

On one hand, the pottery of the ‘Grotta Phase’ verifies the independent character of the Naxian workshop, and on the other displays similarities with the pottery of different and disparate Aegean workshops.

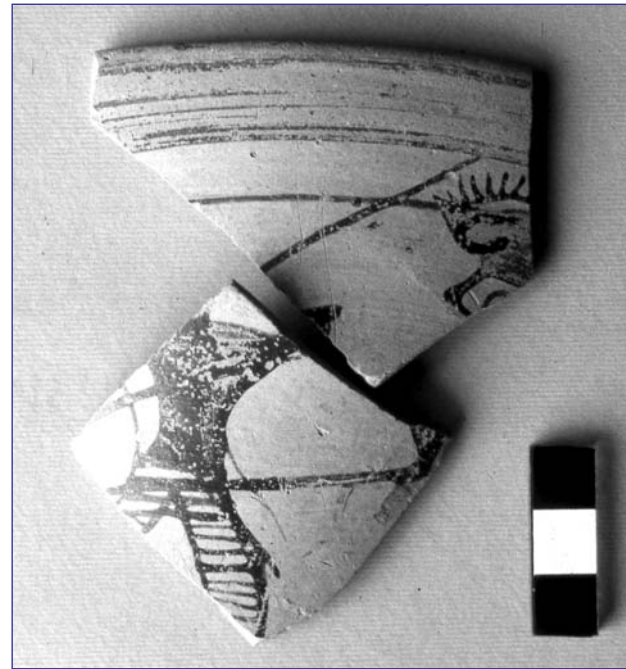


Figure 43.21. Naxos, Grotta: LH IIIC Middle mug sherd depicting a duel between male figures.

It shares with phases 2a, 2b and 3 at Lefkandi (Popham & Sackett 1968; Popham & Milburn 1971; Mountjoy 1999, 696, 716–22, figs. 275–7) the same shapes, a rich iconographic style receptive to influences from the Argolid and Attica, and a singular, linear style with elements of the close style. Mainly, however, it shares a parallel historical course, since the settlements were built with total disregard for the orientation of previous ones, flourished and were abandoned in the same period (Deger-Jalkotzy 1998, 107).

The pottery of Naxos also displays affinities with LM IIIC pottery from central and east Crete and the influence of the Cretan workshops on Naxian pottery proves to be stronger than had previously been ascertained for octopus stirrup jars (Vlachopoulos 2006, ch. 7, 16; 1999c, 308, 311). Relationships between the pottery of the ‘Grotta Phase’ and that of the Dodecanese seem to be few and indirect, which may be due to the early date of the published pottery from the Rhodian cemeteries (Vlachopoulos 2006 (in print), ch. 10; Mountjoy 1999, 45, 1027–66) and the limited and unstratified material from the settlement of Seragia on Kos (Deger-Jalkotzy 1998, 111; Mountjoy 1999, 50, 1106–25 figs. 452–4, 460, 461).

During the thirteenth and twelfth centuries, new walls were constructed in many Cycladic settlements, or older ones were extended and reinforced. As shown elsewhere (Vlachopoulos 1999a, 82; 2003a), the walled settlements of Grotta, Ayia Irini, Koukounaries, Phylakopi, Ayios Andreas on Siphnos and Xombourgo on

Tenos differ in their location as well as in the method of wall construction and the dates of their building. Such facts exclude the possibility that these works were part of a wider defence plan for the islands in the face of some common threat, and certainly the lack of contemporaneity argues against the theory of a simultaneous establishment of 'refugee' settlements in the Cyclades (Vlachopoulos 1999a, 83).

The acropolis of Ayios Andreas was founded in LH IIIB and was inhabited until LH IIIC Early, as is shown from the pottery published to date (Mountjoy 1999, 887-8; Televantou 2000, 116). On Siphnos still, the naturally defended acropolis at 'tis Barona to Froudi' (Fig. 43.22), above Vathy, yielded surface pottery that dates to an advanced LH IIIC phase. Future research (Papadopoulou forthcoming) will test our assumption that this steep small settlement was founded by people who moved there from Ayios Andreas. Pottery from the unpublished tholos tomb at Ayia Thekla on Tenos dates to LH IIIB-C Early (Despinis 1979; Mountjoy 1999, 929-30; Philaniotou 2005, 222 fig. 306), while the defensive settlement of Xombourgo (Kourou 2001) has not yet provided any LH IIIC strata. The sanctuaries at Ayia Irini (Caskey 1984, 241; Barber 1987, 240) and Phylakopi (Renfrew 1985, 364; Barber 1987, 232) continued to be used during the LH IIIC period, when they developed into traditional cult places.

Study of pottery from Delos has shown that the LH IIIC settlement phase does not exist, while Amorgos and Kimolos have yielded only surface finds, or what was left from looted chamber tombs. A sherd from Katapola on Amorgos depicts a ship (Marangou 2002, 20, fig. 30), but it is not yet possible to determine where the vase was made. Pottery from the looted cemetery of Ellinika on Kimolos dates to LH IIIC Middle advanced (Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 1994-95, 10; Vlachopoulos 2006 (in print), ch. 10) and some sherds display similarities with the 'Grotta Phase' Naxian workshop (Fig. 43.23).

The building at Koukounaries, opposite the coast of Grotta, was destroyed by fire a short time after its foundation. Schilardi (1992, 634; 1995, 484, 488) places this disaster in the LH IIIC Middle period, but it seems from the strong influences and imports in pottery that it occurred in the LH IIIC Middle developed. A short-lived and modest reoccupation is dated to LH IIIC Late (Koehl 1984, 204, fig. 10b; Deger-Jalkotzy 1998, 108; Mountjoy 1999, 937), and its pottery shows strong similarities to the 'Grotta Phase'. A reoccupation is also attested for Ayios Andreas on Siphnos (Mountjoy 1999, 888).

The stratified pottery of Koukounaries (Koehl 1984; Mountjoy 1999, 932-7, fig. 381), Phylakopi (Mountjoy 1999, 889, 922-6, figs. 376-8) and Ayia Irini

(Caskey 1984; Mountjoy 1999, 864, 867, 884-6, fig. 361) belongs to different phases of LH IIIC, and nowhere, except Naxos, have sufficient examples of the octopus and close styles been found for chronological inferences to be drawn about the emergence and diffusion of these styles in the Cyclades. The settlement of Koukounaries flourished during LH IIIC Middle developed, the sanctuary of Phylakopi became the focus of ritual use until the end of the same phase, and the sanctuary of Ayia Irini had a limited revival in the LH IIIC Late period (Warren & Hankey 1989, 94, 104, table 2.7; Mountjoy 1999, 38-41, table 2).

Pottery from Kea and Melos displays mainly Helladic and local features, whereas some Minoan features can be observed in pottery from Paros (Koehl 1984). Kea belongs geographically and culturally within the sphere of influence of Attica and Euboea, whereas Melos shows mainland influence as well as significant local peculiarities. In the little-known pottery from Koukounaries on Paros, the influence of the Greek mainland seems more intense and the number of imports greater. Monolithos seems to have been an important settlement of the south Cyclades in the LH IIIC Middle period, proving the vital role of Thera in the intra-Aegean commercial sea lanes and heralding the island's new importance from the Geometric period onwards.

The pictorial style appears with variable frequency and quality. On Paros and Melos, examples of pictorial pottery are few and not distinctive, and only a few sherds from Kimolos show notable similarities with Naxos and the Dodecanese. The close style of mainland Greece does not seem to have been assimilated by the islands, and it is replaced by idiosyncratic creations.

Consequently, in the Cyclades, there is no picture of uniformity among the islands during the LH IIIC period, and it seems that in the pottery there is not only a lack of chronological and stylistic synchronisms between the assemblages, but that each island is also open to different influences.

Evidence for the post-palatial situation in the Cyclades and the Dodecanese demonstrates the difficulty of formulating generalized views for this period in the Aegean. Deger-Jalkotzy (1998, 113) identified a series of major destructions during the transition from LH IIIC Early to the LH IIIC Middle developed and linked these with possible movements of people from the Greek mainland to the Aegean islands. The arrival of new people at some island sites, such as Koukounaries and Emporio on Chios (Hood 1986; Mountjoy 1999, 1148-55, figs. 472-4) is clear, but there is no evidence to support a significant and simultaneous rise in population in the Aegean as a whole.

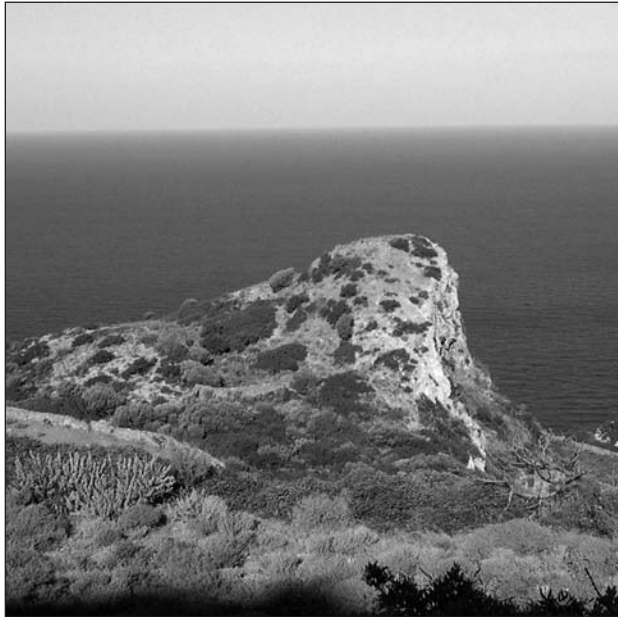


Figure 43.22. The steep rocky acropolis of 'tis Baronas to Froudi'. Surface buildings and homogeneous LH IIIC advanced and late pottery indicate a date of the mid twelfth and early eleventh centuries BC. (Photograph: Z. Papadopoulou - Archive of the 21st EPCA.)

This lack of evidence for violent and simultaneous catastrophes in the settlements of the Cyclades, except for Koukounaries, strongly suggests that LH IIIC was a peaceful period for the Aegean and that no common external threat existed. The period lasted for 120 or even 160 years (Warren & Hankey 1989, 158; Dickinson 1994, 19). Given such a long time period, diverse cultural phenomena and historical events unrelated to each other may have occurred over an extended insular region, where trade and seafaring activities seem to have been vigorous and continuous.

As we have shown elsewhere (Vlachopoulos 2003c; cf. 1999a, 85; Deger-Jalkotzy 1998, 115), the multifarious, singular and heterogeneous picture of the central Aegean during LH IIIC is at variance with the picture of the 'Small Mycenaean Koine', as elaborated by Desborough in the 1960s, a term that no longer applies to the diverse picture that emerges for each island in the Cyclades. In terms of position, the Cyclades in the twelfth century resembled a nerve-centre; they were advantageously placed in the Aegean in an age when goods and ideas were constantly travelling across its waters to the benefit of the intermediary Cycladic ports. It is not at all certain that a unitary kingship moved to the Cyclades after the fall of the palaces, because the independent geographical and cultural character of the islands would not have favoured the development



Figure 43.23. Kimolos, Ellinika. Late Mycenaean pottery. Pictorial and octopus style pottery (the latter probably imported from Naxos) attest a flourishing community of the twelfth century BC. (Photograph: G. Koukas - Archive of the 21st EPCA.)

of collective economic and cultural systems of Hellenic type. The diversity in the material culture and the lack of synchronisms among the major Cycladic centres show that each island followed its own course, dictated by local historical conditions, that each had its own cycle of prosperity during the LH IIIC period and eventually came into contact with different political systems and forms of power.

The conditions of affluence, prosperity and freedom provided by the dense exchange network of LH IIIC established the Aegean more as a sea of mercantile competition than an area of military confrontation and operations: conditions which make possible the existence of a system of politically autonomous centres. Based on the above, it could be maintained that due to social and economic conditions a few islands such as Naxos, Paros and Melos distinguished themselves as autonomous and independent 'centres' of cultural and political power, with the smaller neighbouring islands comprising their 'peripheries'.

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