A New Attic Late Protogeometric Krater from the Siderospilia Necropolis of Prinias (Crete)

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Consistent fragments of a large-sized (lip diameter 53 cm) Attic Late Protogeometric krater (inv. P266) were found in the Early Iron Age Siderospilia necropolis of Prinias,[1] at the geometric centre of Crete, around 500 m far from the related settlement arising on the so-called Patela plateau.[2] The most popular shape called "krater"[3] in this period is an oversized (lip diameter 20–30 cm) circle skyphos with central panel,[4] which has nothing in common with the Siderospilia vessel.

The shape and decoration of the Siderospilia krater (fig. 1) – with double loops handles and panels filled with rectilinear motifs between two sets of vertical circles – are of the same design as a contemporary Attic vase kept in the "Museum Antiker Kleinkunst" in Munich (purchased in 1908 on the art market).[5] The decorative details – vertical zigzags, chequerboard and alternating diagonals filling narrow panels – and the loose way they are painted occur on another large-sized Attic krater, dating to the second half of the 10th century BC, found above a pyre of the cemetery at Nea Ionia, just out-

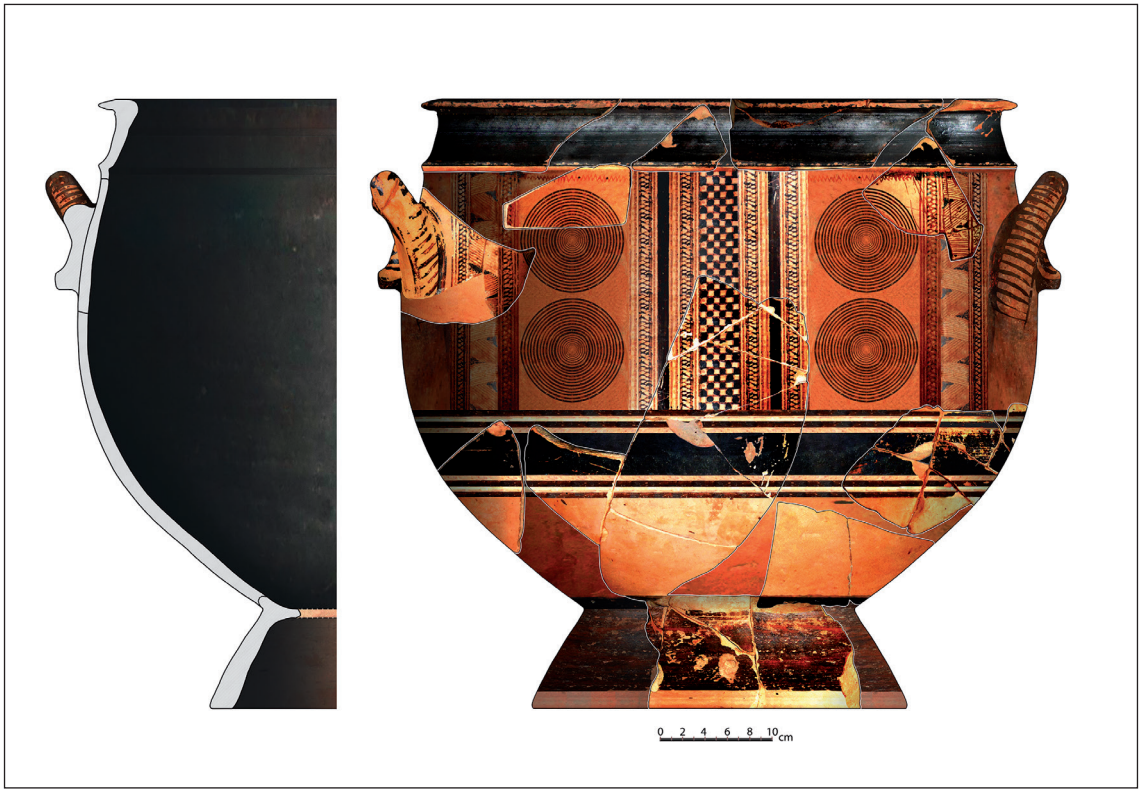

Fig. 1: The krater P266 from Siderospilia graphically integrated.

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side Athens.[6] Such affinity suggests that the Siderospilia and the Nea Ionia vessels could have been manufactured in the same workshop.

The Siderospilia specimen – the southernmost one exported in the Aegean Sea – is the third Attic Late Protogeometric large-sized krater whose shape and decoration are well preserved and the only one preserving the profile of the foot (missing in the Munich and Nea Ionia ones). Just one fragment of what appears to be a similar vessel was found in the settlement area of Knossos.[7] The fragments of two other examples from the Cyclades (Naxos and Paros) could belong to locally made vases.[8] Other Attic Late Protogeometric shapes, however, were widely exported (and imitated) in many sites of the Aegean.[9] Lefkandi and Knossos were the most receptive ones.[10] The causes of such distribution are matter of speculation (practice of gift exchange, intermarriages, trade…).[11]

As for the Siderospilia cemetery, the recipients of the krater and of other, valuable, imported metal products from Egypt[12] and Cyprus[13] must have been the members of wealthy local aristocracies.[14] Their need to exhibit these products in the context of expensive mortuary practices, which were in use among the social élites of the Aegean area at the beginning of the first millennium, had to be the leading cause for attracting such prestige goods from the outside world. Such practices at Siderospilia included also the killing of horses and dogs and the deposition of weapons and jewels among the grave goods. The central position of the settlement of the Patela plateau on the route connecting the northern and southern coasts of central Crete, on the east slopes of the Ida massif, made easier the contacts with the Aegean world. In Crete, in fact Attic Protogeometric pottery imports are distributed along such route: at Knossos and Kanli Kastelli,[15] at Siderospilia and at Gortina.[16] A clay stand fragment found in the sanctuary of Hermes Kranaios at Patsos[17] testifies that Attic Protogeometric pottery travelled also along the Amari valley, on the route connecting the northern and southern coasts of the island, to the west of the Ida massif.[18]

Notes

[1] As for the necropolis in the Protogeometric period (970–840 BC), see Rizza 2011, 25–41, and Biondi forthcoming.

[2] Rizza 2008.

[3] E. g. Coldstream – Catling 1996, 398, (no. 207.7); Coldstream 1972, 73, no. B41–2, fig. 5 ("Small krater"), 76, no. C43, tav. 19 ("Krater").

[4] The same shape has been recently called "crater bowl" by Lemos 2002, 39, 46–48, pls. 79.1–4.

[5] CVA Deutschland, München 3, 9, 9, pls. 103–104.1–2; Lemos 2002, 51, pls. 75.1–2.

[6] Smithson 1961, 151–152, 167–168, no. 48, pl. 29; Lemos 2002, 51, pl. 76.1; Coulié 2013, 38.

[7] Coldstream – Macdonald 1997, 235, no. B43, tav. 36.

[8] Lemos 2002, 51.

[9] Coldstream – Catling 1996, 716; Catling 1998, 368–378, fig. 1; Seroglou 2009.
[10] Coldstream – Catling 1996, 716; Seroglou 2009.
[11] Seroglou 2009, 30.
[12] Matthäus 2014; Matthäus 2017.
[13] Matthäus 2016.
[14] Biondi forthcoming.
[15] Catling 1998.
[16] Santaniello 2013, 254, fig. 3 (a fragment of "crater bowl").
[17] Κούρου – Καρέτσου 1994, 141–142, no. 74, fig. 90, drawings 32–33.
[18] Kanta – Karetsou 1998, 171.

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Fig. 1: Drawing by O. Pulvirenti.

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