

AEGEAN FEASTING A MINOAN PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

This survey of feasting in Bronze Age Crete reveals that feasts could be either exclusive elite celebrations or unrestricted occasions in which social identity rather than power was most important. In contrast, Mycenaean feasting on the Greek mainland seems to have arisen from elite customs aimed at exclusion. A comparison of the evidence for Late Minoan IIIC feasting at Phaistos and convivial practices on the mainland indicates new Mycenaean components to Cretan feasting, suggesting that the earlier pattern had shifted and that Cretan feasts had similarly become elite instruments of competition and negotiation for authority.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the archaeological evidence for convivial practices in Bronze Age Crete and to compare it with the material indications of feasting on the mainland of Greece.¹ Through comparison of Mycenaean evidence and two large LM IIIB–C pottery assemblages at Phaistos, I point out discrepancies as well as reciprocal contributions in traditions of Minoan and Mycenaean feasting. I suggest that the evidence from Phaistos demonstrates that communal drinking and feasts in LM IIIB–C Crete were celebrated to facilitate social communication and promote ideological strategies and political activities.

In the following study, I take into account the role that pottery plays in the investigation and recognition of social patterns in feasting. In ceramic

1. I would like to thank Sharon Stocker and James Wright for inviting me to participate in the colloquium on Mycenaean feasts held at the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in Philadelphia in 2002. Funding from the Institute for Aegean Prehistory enabled me to attend. I am particularly indebted to Wright for invaluable comments and suggestions. I also wish to thank Filippo Carinci for reading and commenting on the text,

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The periods of Minoan Crete referred to throughout this article are as follows: Prepalatial (Early Minoan [EM] I–Middle Minoan [MM] IA); Protopalatial (MM IB–IIB); Neopalatial (MM IIIA–LM IB); Monopalatial (LM II–IIIA1); Final Palatial (LM IIIA2–IIIB [early]); and Postpalatial (LM IIIB [late]–C).

studies, the application of ethnographically observed patterns of the deployment of decorative styles provides sociofunctional explanations of pottery usage. Variability among these patterns provides a key to understanding strategies of social communication and ideological and political manipulation of the occasions and places of social exchange.² According to one model, two modes of decorative variability point to two different social dynamics.³ The first, qualitative variability (i.e., variability by alternation of the decorative elements and substitution or variation of secondary motifs and ornamental details), is employed to negotiate cultural and social identity within the context of balanced confrontations among equal social components; the second, additive or vertical variability (i.e., by accumulation and redundancy of decorative elements), expresses social competition aimed at establishing vertical relationships and hierarchical order.

FEASTING AT LM IIIC PHAISTOS

As I have discussed elsewhere, qualitative variability (substitution) at Phaistos was used for the decoration of LM IIIB and IIIB–C vessels in a symbolic style that asserts social divisions on a horizontal level, while quantitative variability (accumulation) marked the local expressions of the LM IIIC elaborate style, which was more generally associated with elite settlements and included many examples of pictorial pottery.⁴ This latter style, in particular, might be explained as a kind of “elite” or “iconographic” style according to definitions applied in anthropological studies, by which decorative components are encoded with elite ideological and political messages.⁵ The exclusive association of the most elaborate symbolic and iconographic styles with ceramics reserved for drinking (and possibly also for religious offerings) supports the hypothesis that highly competitive feasts were celebrated as occasions of conspicuous consumption and served to promote the ideological strategies of dominant groups during the last phases of Minoan civilization.

At Phaistos I have identified two sites where communal wine consumption and ritual meals took place, the summit of the Acropoli Mediana and the Casa a ovest del Piazzale I at its southern foot (Fig. 1).⁶ The Acropoli Mediana is the settlement’s highest and most visible site; toward the end of LM III it was used for convivial ceremonies.⁷ The large number of kraters and deep bowls found in this area (see, e.g., Figs. 2, 4, 5:1, 3–5) indicates events with open, communal participation.⁸ The many kraters accompanying the even more numerous deep bowls may make it possible to identify sets of vessels corresponding to independent units of distribution and consumption, which could have been used in a sequence of ongoing ceremonies from the end of LM IIIB until the middle of LM IIIC. The variability in fabric and morphology of the pottery (indicating different production units) may suggest that the participants in the feasts came from different residential sites around Phaistos.

The elaborate decoration of this pottery (Figs. 2, 4, 5:1) may be a form of highly competitive display indicating that ceramics were important for the negotiation of status. The presence of female and animal figurines

Figure 1 (opposite). Plan of the western court of the palace at Phaistos, with Mycenaean remains indicated by hatchmarks in the area of A (Casa a ovest del Piazzale I), B, and C. After Levi 1976, pl. 2

2. See, e.g., Wiessner 1983, 1984, 1989; Graves 1994; Hantman and Plog 1984. For Archaic Greek pottery, see Morgan 1991; Morgan and Whitelaw 1991; and see in general Plog 1980, 1995; Conkey and Hastorf 1990. See also Borgna 1999b, and forthcoming.

3. Pollock 1983.

4. Borgna 2003a, pp. 23–27, 354–357; and forthcoming.

5. For the definition of symbolic and iconographic styles, see Plog 1995.

6. Borgna 1997a, 1999b, 2000, 2003a, and forthcoming.

7. Borgna 1997b, 1999a, 2003a, pp. 357–371.

8. Open, fine, decorated vessels for consumption make up 80% of the assemblage; the 214 deep bowls and 70 kraters constitute our best sample of these shapes for the LM IIIC period.



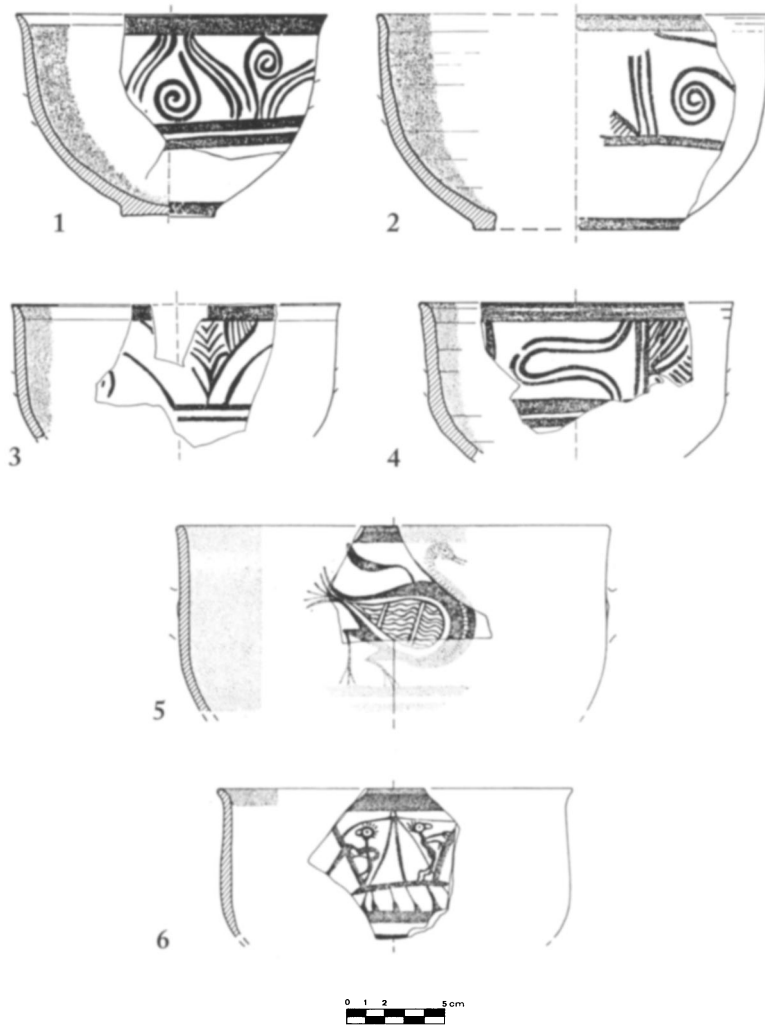


Figure 2. Deep bowls (1–4) and stemmed bowls (5, 6) from the Acropoli Mediana

on the Acropoli Mediana (Figs. 3, 5:2), together with the style of the pottery (Fig. 5:3–5), is evidence of Mycenaean influence. Both the krater and the deep bowl are dependent on Mycenaean functional models and are signs of a substantial “Mycenaeanization” of the local material culture, perhaps as a result of a strategic and selective adoption of mainland elements by the Cretan elite to claim social authority and status.⁹

A similar abundance of decorated deep bowls and fine dinnerware (Figs. 6–8) and a plenitude of kitchen wares (Fig. 9) distinguish the Casa a ovest I.¹⁰ Ashes and coals, broken kraters, and a table or bench mark an occupation level in one room and represent evidence of a possible ceremonial rite. A bronze knife and two bronze sickles (Figs. 10, 11) from the building might be interpreted, together with other evidence such as a bronze bowl and a ceramic stand with elaborate pictorial decoration (Fig. 12), as symbolic artifacts suited to the celebration of banquets. Other finds, such

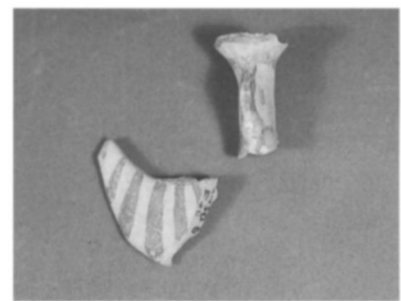


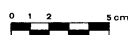
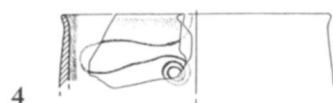
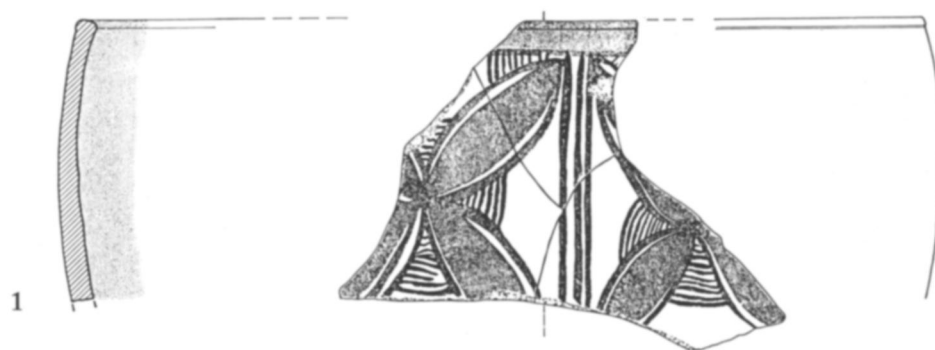
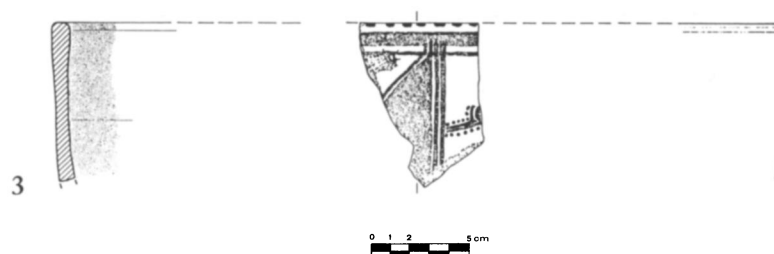
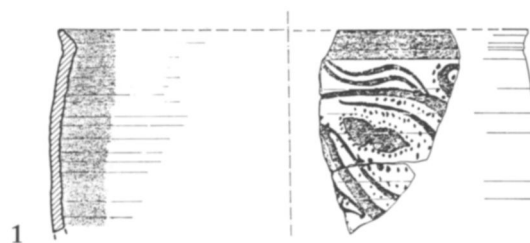
Figure 3. Figurine from the Acropoli Mediana

9. For “Mycenaeanization” at Phaistos, see Borgna 1997b. Cf. Clark and Blake 1994; Wright, forthcoming.

10. Laviosa 1973; Borgna 1997a, 2000, 2001.

Figure 4 (*top*). Kraters (1–3) from the Acropoli Mediana

Figure 5 (*bottom*). Krater (1), figurine (2), and deep bowls (3–5) from the Acropoli Mediana



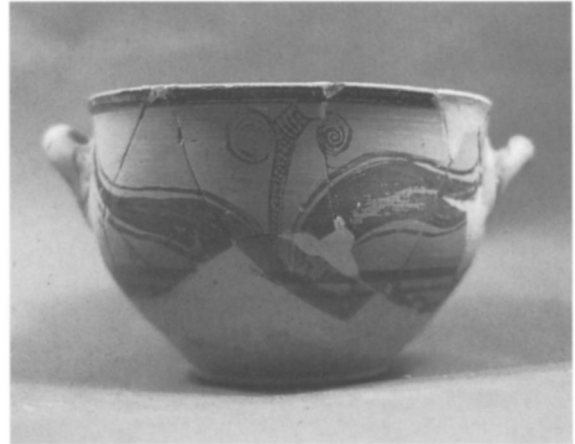


Figure 6 (*top*). Deep bowls from the Casa a ovest del Piazzale I

Figure 7 (*middle*). Krater fragments from the Casa a ovest del Piazzale I

Figure 8 (*bottom*). Pithoid jar from the Casa a ovest del Piazzale I



Figure 9. Cooking jar from the Casa a ovest del Piazzale I

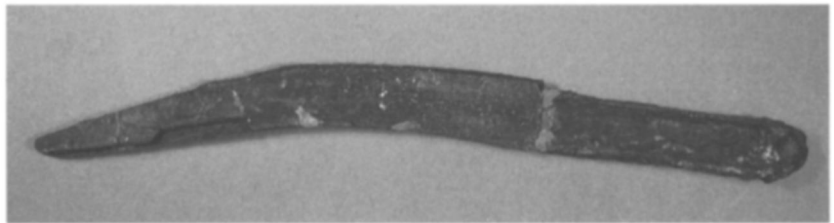


Figure 10. Bronze knife from the Casa a ovest del Piazzale I

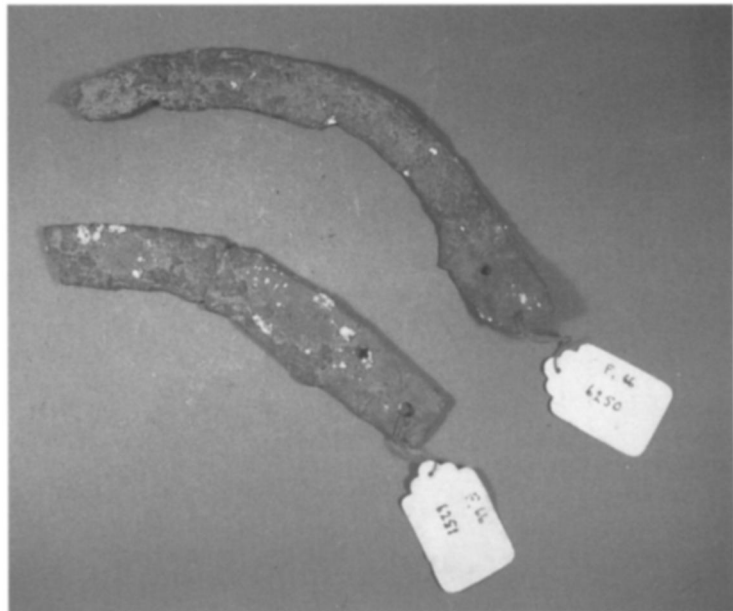


Figure 11. Bronze sickles from the Casa a ovest del Piazzale I

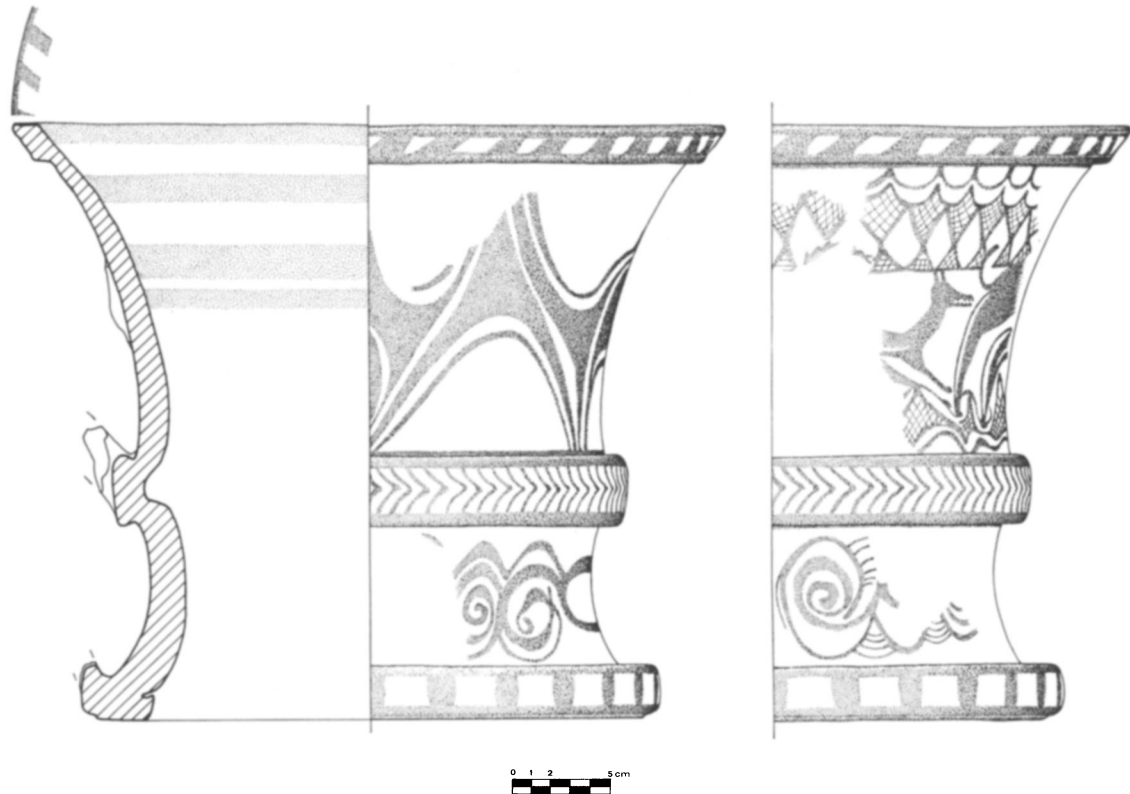


Figure 12. Stand with figurative decoration from the Casa a ovest del Piazzale I

as large storage vessels, unpainted and coarse pottery, weights, and spindle whorls, seem to point not so much to a ritual site as to a domestic structure. The storage and production activities reflect the important economic role of the building, or *oikos*, which may have been an elite dwelling devoted to the control and manipulation of farm produce during the LM IIIC and possibly Subminoan periods.

In an earlier paper on the Acropoli Mediana and the Casa a ovest del Piazzale I, I suggested that the two types of ceremony were related to separate spheres of social exchange, dependent on distinct social roles and with different political implications.¹¹ The one, on the Acropoli Mediana, I interpreted as a kind of public banquet, less exclusive and more open to heterogeneous social components in comparison with that of the Casa a ovest, but at the same time having the function of creating hierarchical relationships and dependencies. The other, in the Casa a ovest, I interpreted as a more restricted rite, aimed at strengthening elite social ties and maintaining economic and possibly political authority.

A thorough investigation will perhaps permit us to distinguish definitively between the functions that these two feasting sites had within the social organization of Phaistos, which I have suggested was a simple form of chiefdom toward the end of the second millennium B.C.¹² In the attempt to find a connection between the two ritual occasions—which in the end might be the archaeological poles of a unique event, albeit separated within the settlement—I first limit myself to underlining features that seem exclusive to either occasion and may help to distinguish feasting patterns according to anthropological classifications.

11. Borgna, forthcoming.

12. See Borgna 2003a, pp. 370–371; 2003b, pp. 159–164.

The depositional pattern of the Acropoli assemblage suggests that community assembly and consumption were among the major activities pursued, as well as cleaning up, without any manifest emphasis upon indoor/outdoor separation.¹³ In the Casa a ovest, elaborate preparation and possibly restricted indoor ritual activity, together with the storage of food and serving vessels, are especially apparent. From the very large number of individual drinking and eating vessels—too many for a gathering indoors—we can infer the occurrence of outdoor assemblies, possibly in some kind of court or open space. The importance of sharing at the Acropoli might therefore stand in opposition to the hoarding and distributing practices in the Casa a ovest, indicating different functions and meanings for the ritual occasions.

The Acropoli deposit spans a period from the end of LM IIIB into LM IIIC, the period when population begins to be concentrated at Phaistos. This period was a highly critical one for social life in Crete, following shifts in settlement, political disruption, and dispersal of population. We might explain the Acropoli as one of a few Cretan places where aggregation and social cohesion around new settlements and eminent individuals occurred. Such individuals, by assuming Mycenaean social habits and behavior, were to become the main leaders within LM IIIC society.¹⁴ Moreover, the Acropoli assemblage can be compared with LM IIIB pottery assemblages from a few Cretan caves, which are characterized primarily by the association of serving and sometimes storage vessels, including in particular deep bowls and kraters.¹⁵ On the basis of these considerations, the convivial gatherings on the Acropoli Mediana could be interpreted as “celebratory feasts,” performed in order to encourage social bonding¹⁶ and as devices for aggregating dispersed populations or for reaffirming social distance in concentrated populations.¹⁷ Possibly regional in scope, these feasts might therefore be considered part of the class of “entrepreneurial” or “empowering feasts,” as defined by Dietler.¹⁸

The meals prepared and consumed at the Casa a ovest, on the other hand, are better described as “competitive feasts,” probably celebrating events directly linked with economic goals and serving a more particular function as redistributive devices.¹⁹ The feasts might also have involved two types of ritual celebration, each with a special role. Ritual furniture found inside, such as the pictorial stand (Fig. 12), some kraters, and the bronzes, might be the archaeological remains of a rite of hosting and gift-giving among equal social components or between groups that initiated and maintained alliances, especially for access to resources or to exchange partners.²⁰ The high number of stored and discarded individual serving vessels might point, however, to a more open, outdoor participation, central to redistribution or patron-role feasts, in which retainers and commoners participated.²¹

It is necessary to defer a detailed discussion on the functions and significance of the Phaistian feasts to a more advanced stage of research at the site. Nonetheless, since we are able to highlight the presence of several Mycenaean cultural elements of feasting, I concentrate in the remainder of this article on the relationship between Minoan and Mycenaean banqueting practices.

13. Cf. Goody 1982, pp. 47–48.

14. See Borgna 2003b.

15. For the Mamelouko cave, see Kanta 1980, pp. 228–229; for the Liliannou cave, Kanta 1971; see also Koumaropilia (Kanta 1980, p. 231) and the Idaean cave (Vasilakis 1990, pp. 130–134).

16. Hayden 1996, p. 135.

17. DeBoer 2001, p. 215.

18. Dietler 1996, pp. 92–96; 2001, pp. 76–80.

19. Cf. Dietler 1996, p. 97. “Empowering” and “patron-role” feasts can be expressions of the same “consumption politics” within the same “consumption community” (for terminology, see Dietler 2001, pp. 76–85, 93–94; Hayden 2001, p. 58).

20. See Perodé 2001, esp. p. 210. For the role of exchange in Postpalatial Crete, see Borgna 2003b.

21. Hayden 1996, p. 129; Dietler 2001, pp. 82–85; cf. also Junker 2001, p. 271. On the practice of discarding vessels used on ritual occasions within the domestic area, see Junker 2001, p. 285.

FEASTING IN MINOAN AND MYCENAEAN CONTEXTS

In a previous paper, I suggested that drinking activities in relevant socio-political contexts constituted a contribution from mainland Greece to Cretan culture, where ritual meals and large communal gatherings for cult ceremonies and festivals were already well rooted in local tradition.²² In a Cretan context the exclusive nature of Mycenaean banqueting practices was possibly modified, the ceremonies becoming less exclusive and more a means of social control in contexts outside of the palaces.

Consumption of wine cannot be ascribed exclusively to Mycenaean influence, however; several authors claim it was a long-established social custom in Crete and an ideological instrument of emerging elites from Prepalatial times.²³ The transfer of the banquet from the palatial court into the urban context could be explained more as the result of the political collapse of palatial societies and the ensuing instability of political systems across the Aegean than as a specific Cretan innovation.²⁴ The widespread and uniform diffusion of such assemblages as deep bowls and kraters—possibly constituting a drinking set—suggests this. As mentioned above, some LM IIIB pottery groups from caves, which include deep bowls, cups, one or more kraters, and sometimes stirrup jars (together with some roughly contemporary grave assemblages),²⁵ might be related to the diffusion throughout Postpalatial Crete of a ritual of aggregation consisting mostly of convivial practices.

To refine this argument and clarify the differences between Minoan and Mycenaean practices, I next summarize the evidence for banqueting in Crete and on the mainland in terms of feasting places and occasions, requisites of participation, the nature and function of feasts, and different strategies of the elite.

VARIETY OF FEASTING PLACES AND OCCASIONS

From the Early Minoan period onward, it is possible to recognize a considerable variety of banqueting occasions and convivial ceremonies. These events include funerary celebrations, purely religious ceremonies, and ritual activities relevant to the establishment of social relationships in Cretan communities—as the well-known evidence from Myrtos and the new discoveries at Prepalatial Knossos suggest.²⁶ The places devoted to such celebrations were often expressly prepared, as indicated by the paved areas and enclosures in the Prepalatial cemeteries, thus demonstrating that social practices concerning the manipulation and, presumably, consumption

22. Borgna 1997a, pp. 210–211; cf. Borgna 2003a, pp. 369–370. On the Mycenaean “symposium” see, e.g., Wright 1995a, 1995b, forthcoming; Carter 1997.

23. E.g., Rehak and Younger 2001, pp. 430, 437, 439; Hamilakis 1996, 1999; cf. Deliyanni 2000.

24. For the end of the palatial phase at Pylos, see Sherratt 2001, p. 229; cf. Davis and Bennet 1999, p. 110. On the complete remodeling of the palace architecture, possibly also for ritual purposes, see Wright 1984.

25. See above, n. 15, for specific

caves, and below, n. 104, on grave assemblages.

26. For Myrtos, see Carinci and D’Agata 1989–1990, pp. 223–224; Gesell 1985, p. 114, no. 89; for Knossos, see Wilson and Day 2000; Day and Wilson 2002.

of food belonged to a structured and complex communal ideology. Formal areas within cemeteries dating from later Prepalatial and Protopalatial times are often associated with material assemblages remarkable for the huge number of serving and consuming vessels, especially conical cups.²⁷ The conical cups were generally not deposited inside the graves, which, as several have argued, may indicate that these ritual areas served as communal shrines and constituted a physical setting for communal ritual activities aimed at maintaining social stability and cohesion.²⁸ A similar function can be ascribed to peak sanctuaries (the main ritual foci for the aggregation of rural population), where communal rites, including consumption, would have shifted at the beginning of Minoan palatial civilization.²⁹

The number of locations used for banqueting increased during the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods. Palaces were provided with several banqueting rooms and structures, each potentially suited to different ritual and social functions. Cultic installations were located in the western wings of the palaces, focusing in particular on small rooms opening on the western court, such as the well-known sanctuary at Phaistos, which was equipped with cooking and serving utensils.³⁰ Huge banqueting halls with elaborate architectural elements were usually located in the northern wings of the palaces, and were provided with ceramic kitchen and dinnerware.³¹ These finds, together with other evidence, make clear that activities of manipulation and consumption were at the palaces' expense and were subject to highly structured ritual codes, possibly including the institution of tribute to support the organization of feasts.³²

Several foci of ritual celebration are detectable within single architectural compounds, as, for example, in the supposed Neopalatial palaces at Chania and Galatas. Impressive concentrations of pottery suited for dining and drinking have been found in association with several structures in Chania, notably the West Court and the Great Hall. Many conical cups were brought to light in the West Court, while ceremonies in the Great Hall, with a platform for a lustral basin, were perhaps characterized by restricted attendance.³³ The cultic complex of Daskaloyannis Street, including pits and drains filled with bones, ash, pots, and conical cups, supplements our picture.³⁴ At the newly discovered palace at Galatas, important indications of ritual consumption were found in several rooms of the building, including the east wing with the "Cooking Place," columnar hall, pillar hall, and room 22 in the west wing.³⁵ Outside the palaces—at extra-urban sanctuaries and religious sites such as caves and peak sanctuaries—

27. See below, n. 62.

28. Branigan 1970b, pp. 98, 132–138 (regarding also the possible transfer of ritual communal activity from the cemeteries to the western courts of the palaces); Branigan 1970a, p. 94; 1993, pp. 76–78 (the author suggests here a limited phenomenon with a restricted attendance); 1998b, pp. 19–21. See in general Walberg 1987, pp. 56–57; Soles 1992, pp. 237–

238; Hamilakis 1998, pp. 119–120.

29. Peatfield 1987. For a recent discussion of peak sanctuaries, see Haggis 1999.

30. Gesell 1985, pp. 120–124, no. 102; Carinci and D'Agata 1989–1990, pp. 228–229; Watrous 2001, p. 202. For an explanation of the similar structural layout in the southwestern wing of the palace, see Carinci, forthcoming.

31. Graham 1961; 1987, pp. 125–

128; for Zakros, see Platon 1971, pp. 203–209; in general, Cultraro 2001, pp. 178–187.

32. See Marinatos 1986, pp. 37–39. For tribute (in Mesopotamia), see Schmandt-Besserat 2001.

33. Andreadaki-Vlasaki 2002, p. 162.

34. Andreadaki-Vlasaki 1997b, pp. 566–571; 2002, pp. 160–161.

35. Rethemiotakis 2002, pp. 58–59.

evidence is clear that ritual meals were an inherent part of common religious belief and practice.³⁶

A marked political dimension may be detected in Neopalatial aristocratic dwellings. Bronze sheet-metal vessels suitable for the consumption of food and drink by elites were often deposited in hoards or treasuries,³⁷ and assemblages of pottery were sometimes discarded together with ashes, food, and the remains of offerings.³⁸ In the Neopalatial period in particular, plentiful amounts of tableware or conical cups began to appear in several extrapalatial settlement contexts, such as the possibly elite dwellings at Petras and Galatas.³⁹ At the same time, certain small rooms in Neopalatial villas may have served as locations for the celebration of *andreia* for a limited number of participants.⁴⁰ Such evidence supports the view that in palatial Crete banqueting practices consisted of an articulated series of events in terms of location, function, and purpose; moreover, it would seem to imply that in Neopalatial times in particular, elite ideology of consumption was materialized according to a common and codified architectonic language. Household urban shrines (at Pseira, for example) provide a further variety of such evidence.⁴¹

A brief consideration of the ceramic evidence reinforces this view, for it brings to our attention a number of different pottery assemblages, all suited to preparation and consumption activities, but each possibly used according to particular conditions. Though the published reports do not permit one to single out well-defined sets of vessels used exclusively on specific ritual occasions and in specific architectural and social frameworks, general trends relevant to the social use of certain vessels and to the functional composition of tableware can be raised.

Fine Kamares cups, jugs, and other pouring vessels are characteristic of aristocratic assemblages in the official halls and residential rooms of the palaces.⁴² More particularly, at the end of the Prepalatial period at Knossos, the footed goblet and the angular bridge-spouted jar were commonly associated with one another,⁴³ replaced in the Protopalatial period by the straight-sided cup and the bridge-spouted jar. In the Protopalatial period, the patterns used for the decoration of such pairs of vessels permit one to recognize the introduction of true drinking sets,⁴⁴ which may have been

36. See Carinci and D'Agata 1989–1990, pp. 226–228, for MM I; Watrous 2001, pp. 193–196, for MM I–II evidence at Mount Juktas and Atsipades; Rehak and Younger 2001, pp. 433–434, with references, for Neopalatial settings in particular. For Kato Syme, see Kanta 1991, p. 482; Lebessi and Muhly 1990; Rehak and Younger 2001, p. 434. For caves, see Tyree 2001, esp. pp. 45–46.

37. *PM II.2*, pp. 627–659; Georgiou 1979; cf. Mochlos: Soles and Davaras 1996, pp. 192–193, pl. 54.

38. For evidence from Tylissos, Nirou Chani, and Sklavokambos, see Platon 1947, p. 636; Wiener 1984,

pp. 20–21; Gesell 1985, p. 135, no. 125, for Tylissos, house A; cf. Graham 1975, pp. 143–144; Marinatos 1986, pp. 37–39. See Gesell 1985, p. 31, no. 100; p. 118, no. 94, for evidence of ritual activity at Palaikastro involving ashes, animal bones, and cups; in general, Rehak and Younger 2001, p. 439.

39. Rupp and Tsipopoulou 1999, pp. 730–731; Rethemiotakis 2002, pp. 60–61 (buildings 1 and 3).

40. Koehl 1997; Carter 1997, pp. 86–89; Rehak and Younger 2001, pp. 401–402; cf. Betancourt and Marinatos 1997, p. 96, for Nirou Chani, room 12.

41. Betancourt 2001. For the “independent sanctuary” at Rousses, Chondros Viannou, with burned deposits and more than 400 conical cups (MM III–LM IA), see Platon 1962, pp. 145–146; Gesell 1985, p. 134, no. 122.

42. For Phaistos and Mallia, see Graham 1961. For Phaistos in particular, see the specialized sets and the evidence of burned bones from rooms LIII–LV, LXII: Levi 1976, pp. 91–110, and below, n. 49. In general, Day and Wilson 1998; Momigliano 2000, pp. 101–102.

43. MacGillivray 1998, p. 94.

44. MacGillivray 1987, pp. 273–276.

instruments of limited and exclusive convivial practices where hosts and guests were intended to be individually identified. In contrast, in the Prepalatial period, sets of drinking vessels (pouring vessels with matching cups) are not detectable.⁴⁵ This pattern might be an indication of completely different social strategies in convivial practices, which originally aimed at communal involvement rather than at restricted social exchange. In addition, cups, goblets, conical cups, and juglets—mostly unpainted or decorated with extremely simple, linear patterns that are often roughly executed—are common in the palaces as well as in sanctuaries and cultic installations, including tomb annexes, and may have been used during communal ritual meetings where attendance was unrestricted.⁴⁶

Although plain juglets and conical cups are ubiquitous in the MM period, it is nonetheless possible to recognize a selective occurrence of this pottery in deposits characterized by huge numbers of vessels and associated with architectural and topographic settings suited to housing many people and central to activities involving intense social exchange, such as public meeting and administration. In room 25 of the palace at Phaistos, well known for its administrative documents, many conical cups and more than 400 juglets (*boccaletti*) were brought to light;⁴⁷ moreover, a large number of juglets, conical cups, bowls, bridge-spouted jars, and small storage jars (*stamnoi*)—mostly coarse and plain or painted with simple decorations—come from a deposit associated with the central court and belonging to the earliest phase of the palace.⁴⁸ In contrast, pottery assemblages consisting mostly of fine Kamares vessels come from inner residential or ceremonial rooms of the palace. Without excluding conical cups and juglets, these assemblages are made up mainly of cups and bridge-spouted jars, together with a range of shapes (e.g., large bowls and kraters or fruitstands) that characterize elite convivial occasions.⁴⁹ A similar opposition can be detected in funerary assemblages in which bridge-spouted jars and cups, as well as miniature storage jars, appear to have been included as customary belongings of the dead, while impressive numbers of pouring vessels such as juglets and pitchers (*oinochoai*), together with conical cups, are primarily associated with annexes and ritual places outside the tombs, as exemplified by the funerary complex at Kamilari.⁵⁰

In Neopalatial times, while deposits consisting of tens or hundreds of conical cups occur frequently in different settings and contexts,⁵¹ elite consumption can perhaps be identified by the occurrence of pairs of identical vessels or finely decorated dinner sets (continuing a tradition that started with MM Kamares ware).⁵² Pairs of vessels may have been used in

45. Momigliano 2000, p. 101.

46. See below. For large attendance at palatial Petras involving the use of conical cups, see Rupp and Tsipopoulou 1999.

47. Levi 1976, pp. 394–397; Carinci 1997, p. 321.

48. Levi 1976, pp. 271–274.

49. For exclusive sets at Phaistos, see, e.g., room LVII: Levi 1976, pp. 91–96; 524–535; cf. Carinci 1997.

50. Levi 1961–1962; Levi 1976, p. 725. For the ritual use of conical cups on the altar in the Recinto delle offerte, see Levi 1976, p. 740.

51. Cf. the Neopalatial tombs at Poros: Lebessi 1967; Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 1992, pp. 528–529; Dimopoulou 1999, p. 29. Cf. Alberti 2001 for the simpler furniture of some Protopalatial tombs.

52. For pairs of vessels, Rehak and

Younger 2001, p. 414. For sets, see, e.g., the group from Gypsades consisting of a jar, dish, and two cups, all decorated with reed patterns: *PM* II.2, pp. 549–550. Cf. the chalice/rhyton, two rhyton cups, jug, and cups from the LM IA Acropolis House at Knossos: Catling, Catling, and Smyth 1979, p. 45, fig. 31; see also Rutter, forthcoming, for Neopalatial Kommos.

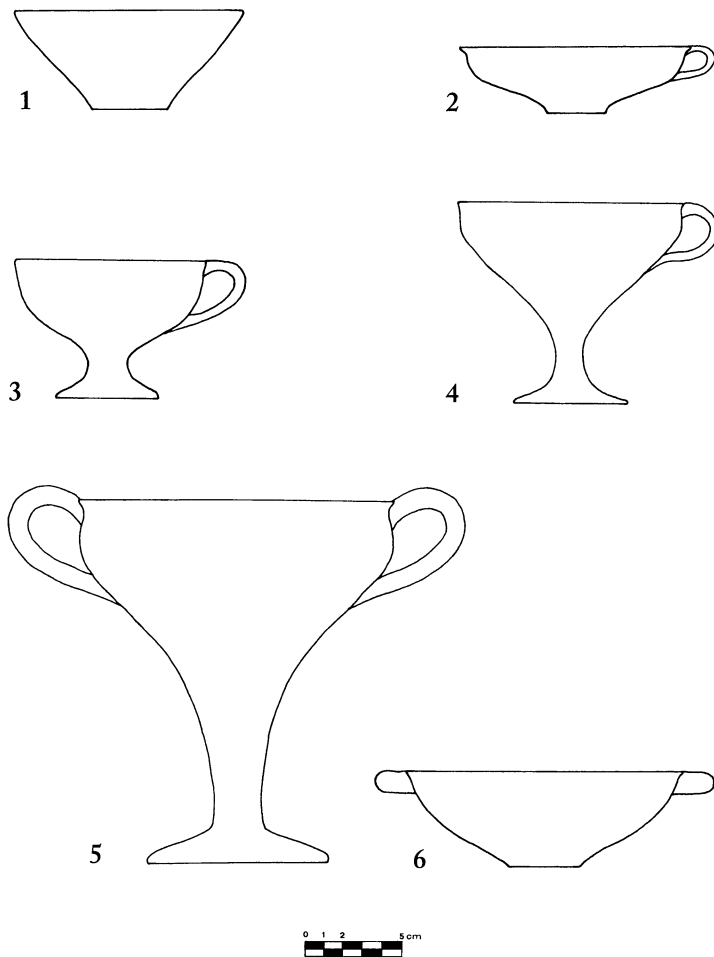


Figure 13. Common LM III fine unpainted shapes: 1) conical cup; 2) shallow cup; 3) champagne cup; 4) low-stemmed goblet; 5) loop-handled kylix; 6) shallow bowl. After Hallager 1997a, p. 408, figs. A:2, 6, 8, B:5; p. 409, fig. C:2, 3

rituals of hospitality to enhance reciprocal personal bonds. In addition, some vessels may have been suited almost exclusively to ritual activities involving liquids, like “communion cups,” which are found in the thousands in sanctuaries such as Kato Syme, but rarely in settlements or tombs.⁵³

In the Monopalatial, Final Palatial, and Postpalatial periods, differentiated sets of vessels may indicate similar multidimensional aspects of banqueting. In LM III, however, convivial occasions were possibly mobilized by elite ideologies and attended by limited and exclusive sectors of the population; this is suggested by the presence of so-called champagne cups (Fig. 13:3), which probably served the same purpose as conical cups. During LM III we see an overlap in the use of these two shapes in purely religious contexts, and champagne cups seem to have played the same roles as conical cups in earlier times.⁵⁴ The two vessels, however, are not exclu-

53. Kanta 1991, p. 482; cf. Lebesse 1975, pp. 193–194, pls. 197, 198; 1986, p. 354, pl. 237. This evidence stands in opposition to the record on the mainland, which shows that the same ceramic shapes, especially kylikes, were used on many different

celebratory occasions, both secular and cultic.

54. See, e.g., the champagne cups on the altar in the Shrine of the Double Axes at Knossos: *PM* II.1, pp. 335–338; cf. other evidence from a shrine detected by Popham (1970, p. 191). For

similarity of ritual and depositional mode, compare the champagne cup found inside a krater at LM III Milatos (below, n. 104) with the conical cup found inside a cooking pot at LM I Poros (Lebesse 1967, p. 200).

sive; rather they are placed together within the same deposits, in particular within LM III tombs—further evidence of their similar and possibly complementary functions.⁵⁵ The champagne cups show special attention to manufacture and surface treatment, which may be indications that they imitate metal forms. Considered in conjunction with the shape of the bowl and the distinctive stemmed foot, such care may be interpreted as having highly symbolic significance. On this basis, we may infer that offering and consumption were included within the elite sphere of social exchange on religious occasions as well. The more selective mode of deposition of champagne cups, with a less-widespread distribution than that of conical cups and discard patterns that never involve such high numbers of vessels, suggests that, although plainware (Fig. 13) was used in similar ritual settings in LM III, it also had more selective social purposes than in earlier times, possibly as a consequence of the impact of Mycenaean social behavior on the islanders.

On the basis of our current state of knowledge and available publications, banqueting practices on mainland Greece appear not to have entailed as rich a variety of equipment or as elaborate a series of structures as is found on Crete.⁵⁶ The origins of convivial practices on the mainland appear to have been rooted in the private sphere of elite social values, which emphasized generosity and hospitality in the framework of direct, reciprocal transactions. That these transactions never involved large groups is suggested by the occurrence of pairs of identical serving vessels in both settlements and wealthy tombs toward the end of the Middle Helladic (MH) period.⁵⁷ With particular regard to funerary assemblages, the distribution of the earliest evidence matches the geography of the emerging Mycenaean palatial societies and reveals a purely sociopolitical dimension.⁵⁸ MH banquets served mainly as an assertion of vertical differentiation and as a materialization of the ideology of a limited segment of society.⁵⁹ Only in Late Helladic (LH) III did different settings for the banquets—both funerary and domestic—emerge. The archaeological record permits one to infer that, although the nature of the feasts was generally homogeneous and

55. Conical cups were placed in LM II–IIIA tombs, but they occur as isolated examples in comparison with earlier assemblages (Popham, Catling, and Catling 1974, p. 209, for Sellopoulo; Baxévani-Kouzioni and Markoulaki 1996, p. 653, figs. 14, 15; Platon 1957, p. 622, fig. 3, and Kanta 1980, pp. 58–68, for Episkopi, tomb B, with six examples; Halbherr 1901, pl. 11, and Kanta 1980, pp. 75–76, for Erganos). The champagne cup is typical of LM IIIA2–IIIB grave goods, and in turn appears singly or in small concentrations (cf. Andreadaki-Vlasaki 1997a, p. 500, for Chania; Tzedakis 1988 for Armenoi). Both types of vessel occur in assemblages dated late in Final

Palatial or early in Postpalatial times, such as at Phoinikia (Kanta 1980, pp. 24–25) and Gournes (Chatzidakis 1918, p. 75, fig. 19; pp. 83–85, fig. 32: tomb 5); for both vessel types in settlement deposits, possibly attesting ritual activities, see Ayia Triada, “strato VII, saggio III” (below, n. 105). On the appearance of champagne cups, see in general Betancourt 1985, p. 164; *Kommos* III, p. 132 (“goblet”); on the decrease of conical cups in LM IIIA coinciding with an increase of champagne cups, see Rehak and Younger 2001, p. 446. Champagne cups are one of the few LM III vessel shapes devoid of decoration (cf. Hallager 1997b, p. 23), apart from other apparently

Mycenaean-influenced vessels, such as goblets, kylikes, and shallow bowls (see Fig. 13:4–6). For the possible dependence on metal models, see Popham 1969, p. 301. On limited attendance on ritual occasions in LM III, see also Hamilakis 1998, pp. 125–126.

56. For differences in kitchenwares and cooking practices of the Minoans and Mycenaeans, see Borgna 1997a.

57. Nordquist 1999; 2002, esp. p. 132; see Wright, this volume, pp. 139, 141–143, tables 1–5.

58. See below, n. 72.

59. Cf. Cavanagh 1998, p. 111. For ideological materialization, see Demarais, Castillo, and Earle 1996.

derived ultimately from the sponsoring activity of palatial authorities, the performances could have had different purposes and been promoted to facilitate communal participation on religious occasions.⁶⁰

REQUISITES OF PARTICIPATION

Analysis of the Minoan evidence suggests that the manipulation, offering, and consumption of food and drink supported not only strategies of exclusion by the elite, but also substantial rites of aggregation and cohesion. In EM I, the vessel probably used for ritual drinking was the large chalice, whose shape suggests that it functioned directly as a communal drinking vessel rather than as a mixing or serving vessel.⁶¹ As mentioned above, huge numbers of individual vessels imply large social gatherings from late Prepalatial into Neopalatial times. In the EM–MM Phourni cemetery at Archanes, more than 300 vessels, mostly conical cups, have been found in association with the paved area near the terrace in front of building 6 and near tholos B. From building 4 (LM IA), which has been interpreted as a workshop for wine production, 250 conical cups were brought to light.⁶² At Ayia Triada, impressive numbers of conical cups, jugs, and plates come from recent excavations in the annexes (the so-called *camerette*) south of tholos A (MM I).⁶³

At the beginning of the MM period, several deposits of many fine cups together with serving vessels in the palatial centers point to the importance of communal consumption, as do huge assemblages of conical cups—found in palatial clusters such as at Petras and Galatas and extra-palatial centers such as Nirou Chani—in later periods.⁶⁴ The LM Mansion at Kastelli Pediada has been interpreted as a focal place for libation and dining on the basis of large amounts of pottery.⁶⁵ Even when the quantity is insufficient to infer communal participation on a large scale, form, manufacturing technique, and surface treatment of the conical cups—extremely simple and highly standardized⁶⁶—seem to underplay individual identity in favor of group affiliation (or exclusion), and to promote social solidarity and foster a sense of community.⁶⁷

Pottery used for ritual meals at cultic feasts, such as at MM and LM Kato Syme, consists mostly of simple undecorated domestic ware. Kamares

60. Wright, forthcoming. The well-known evidence of Tsoungiza, for example, has been connected with the emergence of the palaces: Wright 1994, pp. 69–70. For palatial contexts in LH III, consider the discussion on the occurrence of large festivals involving offerings to the gods and distribution of goods: Piteros, Olivier, and Melena 1990; Killen 1994; Hägg 1995; Sacconi 2001. On Tsoungiza and other occasions of public feasting in Mycenaean palace societies, see the article by Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas, and other contributions in this volume.

61. Cf. Wilson and Day 2000, esp. p. 28. For the ceremonial function of the chalice, see also Haggis 1997, p. 298.

62. Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1972; Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, pp. 227–229, 396 (cf. also for building 17); Soles 1992, p. 145.

63. For the new data I thank Filippo Carinci, who is studying the pottery. See also La Rosa 2001, p. 224; for the context, Cultraro 2000. Cf. the huge number of conical cups detected in the context of ritual smashing in the cemetery of Drapanias Kisamou: *AR* 2000–2001, pp. 140–141.

64. Rethemiotakis 2002. For MM IA deposits at Knossos, see Momigliano 1991, esp. pp. 155 (Upper East Well), 176 (north quarter of the city), 220 (house B); also *PM* I, pp. 186–188, figs. 135, 136 (deposit under the West Court). For Galatas, see also Rethemiotakis 1999a, 1999b.

65. Rethemiotakis 1997.

66. Gillis 1990; Wiener 1984; Knappett 1999. For recent considerations on typological variabilities, see also Van de Moortel 2001, pp. 47–50, 60–68.

67. Cf. also Hamilakis 2002, pp. 196–197.

and other prestigious decorative styles occur rarely, which may mean that the prevailing ideology emphasized the community rather than individuality. Elaborate modes of discard of vessels and feasting remains (e.g., the rows of 200 ordered, upside-down conical cups in the pillar room of house B at Gypsades)⁶⁸ make it clear that ritual actions were encoded in a strict liturgy. Knowledge and control of these ritual practices were probably sources of power and authority, in contrast to single performances, which seldom constituted an important arena for social and political competition.⁶⁹

The restricted access to banquets detected in some contexts, such as Prepalatial tombs and Neopalatial dwellings, has been explained by several scholars as the attempt by emerging elites to manipulate instruments of social power and political legitimization by favoring exclusion and selective affiliation.⁷⁰ This evidence, however, reflects secondary strategies aimed at mobilizing practices that originally focused on the sanction of unity and community belonging. As an example, the wide diffusion in EM IIB of the low-footed goblet or eggcup, a vessel suited to individual use in contrast with the earlier chalice,⁷¹ might be viewed as a later attempt by elites to emphasize personal roles within the established ideology of ceremonial consumption.

Mainland Greece provides evidence for a different pattern. To the best of my knowledge, the earliest certain banquetting finds appear in the most complex MH tombs, mainly dating toward the end of the period, and are fully integrated into the framework of highly competitive struggles for political authority. The exclusive and restricted nature of Early Mycenaean feasts is best illustrated by tumuli in the Argolid and by shaft grave enclosures, as well as by examples of later tholoi and wealthy chamber tombs.⁷² The occurrence of precious metal vessels suited to drinking appears to confirm that Mycenaean convivial habits favored exclusion rather than cohesion.⁷³ Restricted attendance at feasts sanctioned bonds with powerful ancestors, legitimized power, and strengthened ties among equals.⁷⁴

Funerary evidence suggests a similar trend in Crete, and indicates Mycenaean influence in LM III. Such influence is particularly manifest in the funerary enclosure of Archanes, the burial place of a group of people who were separated from the rest of the community and shared common modes of aristocratic ritual consumption.⁷⁵ Toasting and ritual smashing of vessels at the tombs may also be connected with Mycenaean customs, as

68. Hogarth 1899–1900, p. 76; *PM* II.2, p. 548, fig. 348; Wiener 1984, p. 20. Cf. also Knossos, Southwest Pillar Crypt (*PM* IV.1, p. 3; Gesell 1985, p. 92, no. 39); Sklavokampos, room 8 (Marinatos 1939–1941, p. 74; Gesell 1985, p. 135, no. 123); Archanes (Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, pp. 227–228).

69. Cf. Moody 1987, p. 240.

70. For Prepalatial tombs, see Braniagan 1993, p. 78; for Neopalatial elites, Hamilakis 1999; Moody 1987; cf. also Wilson and Day 1999, esp. p. 43; Wilson and Day 2000, p. 62.

71. Wilson and Day 1999; 2000, p. 28; cf. Day and Wilson 2002, pp. 151–152. For the chalice, see above, n. 61.

72. See, e.g., the funerary evidence at Mycenae, Prosymna, Asine, Dendra, Argos, Kokla, and Menidi: cf. Demakopoulou 1990; Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1995, pp. 118–120; Cavanagh 1998, pp. 106–107; Hamilakis 1998, pp. 119–120; Cavanagh and Mee 1998, pp. 111–112; Wright, forthcoming. For MH rites, see Nordquist 1990; cf. Kilian-Dirlmeier 1995, pp. 49–52; *Alt-Ägina* IV.3, pp. 120–122; Voutsaki

1998, p. 44. In general on the shaft graves: Dickinson 1977 (e.g., pp. 43, 47); Kilian-Dirlmeier 1986; Graziadio 1988, p. 346; 1991, p. 405; cf. Cavanagh and Mee 1998, pp. 50–51.

73. For detailed discussion of metal vessels, see Wright, this volume.

74. Cf. Dabney and Wright 1990.

75. Kallitsaki 1997; in general on the problem of warrior graves and tombs with bronzes in Crete, see Matthäus 1983; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985; Haskell 1989, pp. 102–106; for further bibliography, see Löwe 1996.

several groups of broken kylikes near LH/LM III tombs indicate.⁷⁶ Such practices could be a sign of the celebration of communal banquets or drinking at funerals. To confirm such a hypothesis we should be able to identify ceramic sets that are separate from the personal furniture of the dead and were used for preparation and consumption of funeral meals or drinks. Notwithstanding the ambiguous state of documentation and publication of Mycenaean funerary assemblages, it is notable that the number of vessels reported from Mycenaean tombs is never as large as that of vessels detected in the EM, MM, and LM cemeteries of Crete. The most remarkable deposit, chamber tomb 13 at Dendra, consists of 200 sherds belonging to 40 goblets, which pales in comparison with the hundreds of vessels recorded from some Cretan assemblages.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the little Mycenaean evidence that can be considered reliable as an indication of communal rites practiced near tombs comes from inside single funerary complexes and tombs, that is, in the dromoi and near the *stomia* of the tholoi and inside the tumuli and funerary enclosures.⁷⁸ Such installations, whether or not they served to celebrate convivial feasts, do not appear to have been intended for a gathering of the whole community; rather, by promoting exclusion, they would have stressed links and solidarity among the few attendees who were close to the families and the households of the eminent dead.

The attendance of commoners at elite celebrations, which is also reasonably supposed to have been encouraged by the dominant ideology, may have been channeled toward other behaviors and practices. When we consider both the importance of processions, as recently detected in the Mycenaean religious performances, and the setting of important Mycenaean funerary and celebratory monuments, we might propose that interaction between elites and commoners in order to sponsor elite activities and enterprises could have taken place during funerary processions as well.⁷⁹ Only within the framework of the sponsorship and organization of the LH III palaces did mainland feasts become instruments of social control by promoting inclusive ideological strategies and behavior, including possibly open participation and the direct involvement of commoners.⁸⁰

76. In Crete, see, e.g., Kamilari: Novaro 1999, p. 151, n. 7; p. 157, figs. 1, 2; Poros: Lebessi 1967, p. 204, pl. 181; Armenoi: Tzedakis 1988, p. 513; Hamilakis 1998, p. 122; Gournes: Chatzidakis 1918, pp. 75–77, figs. 19, 21. In the cases of Armenoi and Gournes, we have a thorough picture of the ritual meal, which seems to have been not only symbolically represented, but actually consumed, as the articulation of vessel shapes and other remains indicate.

77. See Åström 1977, p. 72; cf. the evidence recorded at Mycenae by Wace (1932, p. 131; p. 38 for Kalkani, tomb 544; and p. 35 for tomb 523, with a

niche excavated near the *stomion*). For the Early Mycenaean period, see Cavanagh and Mee 1998, p. 55; cf. Åström 1987, p. 215; Wilkie 1987; and summary in *AR* 1981–1983, p. 26, for Kokla.

78. Cavanagh and Mee 1998, p. 54, for evidence of burned layers and ashes near the *stomia* of tholoi; cf. also p. 72; Protonotariou-Deilaki 1990, p. 82, for Kazarma; Persson 1942, pp. 56–59, for tombs 9–10 at Dendra. For special structures, see Protonotariou-Deilaki 1990, p. 82 (Argos A and C), and recently Hielte-Stavropoulou 2001.

79. See now Vikatou 2001. On the

lack of large meeting places in Mycenaean urban settings, see Cavanagh 2001; for the limited space within religious buildings, cf. Albers 2001, pp. 136–138. See in particular Hägg 2001, on processions, and Wright 1987, on the setting of Mycenaean funerary monuments.

80. Official communal ceremonies could have remained restricted and exclusive, however, as seems to be indicated by selected ritual instruments, including a few miniature vessels, in association with evidence for communal banqueting at Pylos: Isaakidou et al. 2002, p. 90.

NATURE AND FUNCTION OF FEASTING

In the Minoan world the same ideological strategy, aimed at strengthening solidarity and reducing members to anonymous, faceless participants, underlined the huge distance of the community from the center of power. For example, at Ayia Triada stone chalices appear to have been used in the rooms belonging to the *Quartiere signorile di nord-ovest*, where, according to Robert Koehl, the rites of the *andreion* were performed, while hundreds of conical cups, which were probably involved in the same rites of ritual consumption, were found in the nearby storeroom.⁸¹ The technical and morphological standardization of these vessels, devoid of stylistic elaboration, and the difference in the raw material between the chalices and the cups are clear signs of the unlikelihood of interaction between elites, at the focal center of the rite, and the public, which may have watched or participated but only as anonymous actors. A similar inference can be drawn at Mallia, house Za, where the furniture of ceremonial hall 5, together with finds from the nearby storerooms, permits one to associate a single stone rhyton with hundreds of conical cups.⁸²

In Minoan ritual, the distance between the common populace and the elites was metaphorically expressed in iconographic representations such as the *genii* and the enthroned deity (which appear, for example, on the well-known ring from Tiryns).⁸³ Among examples of this iconographic type that show serving and pouring activities, the Kamilari clay model best illustrates these activities as tasks of subordinates or nonhuman beings, excluded from social exchange.⁸⁴ It is clear that although elite/nonelite interaction during the ritual performances was minimal, the center derived its authority from the community by asserting its unity and cohesion.

In contrast to practices associated with Minoan feasts, service and distribution in Mycenaean feasts had a completely different status. Originally the activities were restricted to the elite stratum, and even though feasting seems to have expanded to include most, if not all, of the population, the “symposiastic” structure of the feast continued to be central to its practice. In such a setting, the central person, as a kind of *primus inter pares*, interacted dramatically with the participants by appointing rights of attendance and status.

The Mycenaean krater, the most meaningful symbol of drink distribution, is a monumental version—again a kind of *primus inter pares*—of the individual drinking vessel, as the typological development of its form during LH III clearly indicates. In the earliest LH III phases, when the drinking set is dominated by goblets and kylikes, the stemmed krater with vertical handles, similar to a large goblet, is the vessel used for holding and distributing wine. From late LH IIIB onward, as the kylix is gradually replaced by the deep bowl, the krater, now plain and with horizontal handles, is transformed into a huge bowl as well.⁸⁵ Another important vessel used for distribution is the dipper,⁸⁶ a typical Mycenaean form also found in LM III contexts. Formerly in Crete, the dipper had appeared exclusively as coarse kitchenware and may have been used only for cooking.⁸⁷ The importance of distribution in the Mycenaean banquet seems therefore to express the need of the sponsors to assert their authority by demonstrating a

81. Halbherr, Stefani, and Banti 1980, pp. 63, 84–85, 112, figs. 32, 33. For the interpretation as an *andreion*, see Koehl 1997 and above, n. 40. For the possible cultic role of Magazzino 15 (with two central pillars), see Militello 2001, p. 161.

82. Demargne and Gallet de Santenre 1953, pp. 69–72.

83. Sakellariou 1964, pp. 202–203, no. 179 (see also Wright, this volume, p. 165, fig. 16). For the relevance to wine-drinking rituals, cf. Rehak and Younger 2001, p. 430.

84. Levi 1961–1962; Novaro 1999; Lefèvre-Novaro 2001.

85. See Furumark shapes (FS) 9 and 255 for LH IIIA (e.g., Mountjoy 1986, pp. 60, 65, figs. 70, 75) and FS 281, 284, and 305 for IIIB (Mountjoy 1986, pp. 116–119, figs. 142, 143, 146).

86. Mountjoy 1986, pp. 87, 116 (FS 236).

87. See, e.g., Borgna 1997a, p. 197, fig. 7 (LM III).

power of attraction throughout the process of negotiating identity and status within a selected group of participants.

Bell-kraters were not as widely imitated in LM Crete, nor as often imported, as kylikes, goblets, and bowls. At the Unexplored Mansion at Knossos, for instance, kraters are not represented.⁸⁸ In contrast, the amphoroid krater, clearly distinguished from individual drinking vessels by its shape, asserts a distance between the host and the commoners and therefore would have been accepted in the LM III assemblages.

In the Minoan world, from the EM period onward, preparation and manipulation were apparently more relevant activities than consumption in the ideology of communal feasts, as the huge variety of kitchen instruments and the elaboration of pouring vessels, with great emphasis on spouts, demonstrate.⁸⁹ Mobilization of labor for storing and processing of food was much more important than consumption in the Cretan ideology of power relationships.⁹⁰ The stylistic elaboration and regulation of Mycenaean kylikes and drinking vessels, in contrast, suggest that consumption was subject to ritual codes and constituted an important social arena for the negotiation of power and status.⁹¹

When the Cretan elites, in the transformative LM social framework, began to acquire and emphasize habits of conspicuous consumption in competitive relationships among emerging groups, they devoted much more care than previously to stylistic elaboration of drinking sets, often decorated according to the dynamics of group identity and affiliation.⁹² For this purpose, Cretan elites borrowed from the Mycenaean world vessels such as the kylix, goblet, bowl, and krater in order to emphasize the moment of consumption. From LM II onward, the pottery used in communal politics and convivial ceremonies is finely executed and generally decorated, thereby revealing the strategies of elite groups.

From the evidence reviewed here, the differences between Minoan and Mycenaean feasting practices confirm what has long been known from other fields of research, namely, that the social structure of Cretan communities was different from that of mainland communities from the Early Bronze Age onward. In Crete, banqueting seems to have represented roles and values peculiar to the political strategies of so-called corporate societies or group-oriented chiefdoms.⁹³ Power was structured and controlled within the limits set by the prevailing corporate cognitive code, which considered individuals as anonymous, and embodied principles of community solidarity and unity. Open communal occasions that emphasized these principles, however, were only one type of Minoan feast; other, more exclusive, elite celebrations emphasized different strategies of social control. In terms of the manipulation of food and drink, Cretan society emerges as a very complex civilization, provided with a variety of banqueting practices that were multidimensional and largely dependent on communal ideologies, and thus subject to structured behavior and rules. By contrast, banqueting in the Mycenaean world was originally a powerful competitive instrument, one peculiar to small-scale network communities and enhanced by exclusionary power strategies. According to a recent dual-processual theory of social evolution, the political actors of exclusionary polities developed a political system around their monopoly of sources of power based

88. Popham 1984. For the Mycenaean origin of the Ephyrean goblet, conical bowl, kylix, and krater, see Niemeier 1985, pp. 195–197; Betancourt 1985, p. 154; Popham 1988, p. 222; Haskell 1997, p. 188. French (1997) argues that the Cretans imported the social function of the goblet and not merely the shape.

89. Cf. Borgna 1997a, p. 205.

90. Consider the important relationships between ritual activity and storage as detected in Minoan architecture: Hitchcock 2000, pp. 145–156.

91. Cf. Dabney 1997.

92. See above, n. 52; for the stylistic elaboration of drinking vessels from LM I onward, see the documentation in Betancourt 1985, p. 149, and *passim*.

93. Blanton et al. 1996; Feinman 2000. For group-oriented chiefdoms, cf. Renfrew 1974; Drennan 1991, p. 284, in particular for the trajectory from group-oriented chiefdoms to early states. For relevant ideological strategies, see also Haggis 1999, pp. 78, 81; for recent discussion on corporate societies and Minoan Crete, see Schoep 2002; Hamilakis 2002.

on a network of exchange relations, in which the individual dimension never faded. In this kind of network strategy, feasts occur frequently and constitute an active and dynamic means of social exclusion and attainment of power.⁹⁴

LH/LM III ELITE STRATEGIES

In LH IIIA–B Greece, banquets and feasts, though not completely restricted to the palaces, were primarily regulated, sponsored, and organized by the central authorities. As a powerful instrument for status negotiation, banqueting may have been mobilized by the palatial elites and, for the local population, could have been limited mainly to the private sphere of funerals, where social bonds were reproduced in a highly symbolic and idealized manner and would not affect the concrete balance of power relationships.⁹⁵ In LH IIIB, the central phase of the Mycenaean palatial age, feasts were dramatically controlled and perhaps even opposed by the central authorities in the funerary sphere as well, as emerges from a brief survey of grave goods.⁹⁶

Notwithstanding the imbalance of documentation, intriguing differences between mainland Greek and Cretan mortuary practices during LH/LM III can be pointed out. Generally speaking, apart from the rich drinking and serving metalware found in wealthy Early Mycenaean tombs, grave goods that may be less ambiguously interpreted as direct belongings of the dead do not have a clear connection with feasts or banquets: the goods include primarily closed vessels, with only a few isolated goblets or kylikes, while the krater is seldom found. Representation of the dead as a host or officiator of banquets on a large scale seems to have been exclusively channeled through the disposal of precious metal vessels into selected early LH III tombs. Metalware assemblages, including a wide range of articulated shapes and functions suited to preparing, cooking, serving, mixing, and distributing, constitute the best evidence for detecting ritualized conviviality in the Mycenaean world,⁹⁷ and within the tombs they establish a direct link with the palatial furniture for official feasts, as corroborated by Linear B documents.⁹⁸ As confirmation, the rare deposits of

94. Blanton et al. 1996; cf. Galaty and Parkinson 1999. It is possible that competitive feasts, at the transition from the MH period to the Mycenaean world, were expressions of “entrepreneurial” or “empowering” activities (Dietler 1996, pp. 92–96; 2001, pp. 76–77). Although feasts on the mainland possibly developed into more complex forms of banqueting according to dia-critical patterns of conviviality, they never reached the elite level of banqueting of Minoan Crete. On the occurrence of highly competitive feasts and general alliance-building activities within societies provided with network

strategies of political power, see Junker 2001, p. 282.

95. The shift of energy investment from secular architecture (the megaron) to burial monuments (the large tholos) at Nichoria at the beginning of the palatial age may be considered a relevant indication; see Shelmerdine 1999, p. 559, and references.

96. See Voutsaki 1995, p. 59; 1999, pp. 112–113; Cavanagh and Mee 1998, p. 126. For funerals as places where “rank and status are actively contested,” see Parker Pearson 2002, pp. 84–85. It seems to be meaningful that the architectural structures for possible commu-

nal celebrations of single families and *oikoi*, such as altars (above, n. 78), date almost exclusively to the Early Mycenaean period.

97. Matthäus 1980, pp. 17–53; cf. Darcque 1987, pp. 198–200.

98. See, e.g., the Ta tablets, recently discussed by Killen (1998) and Palaima (2000); also Speciale 1999. Cf. Ventris and Chadwick 1956, pp. 332–346, esp. pp. 325–326. We may suppose that similar rich assemblages were placed in some LH IIIA2–IIIB wealthy tombs as well, such as the tholoi at Mycenae.

pottery recognizable as drinking sets within early LH III tombs generally consist of plain unpainted or “tinned” fine vessels, intended to imitate metalware and usually placed together within special settings of the tombs, such as shafts or niches, as are metal vessels.⁹⁹ In the Mycenaean world the palatial ideology seems therefore to have mobilized communal feasting activities by channeling convivial practices through manners and expressions peculiar to “diacritical” palatial feasts.¹⁰⁰

The shifting of social practices such as banqueting from the secular arena of settlements to the private sphere of funerals—itsself evidence of Mycenaean influence—is responsible for the emergence of wealthy and warrior graves with bronzes in the Mycenaean, or Monopalatial, period at Knossos and, slightly later, at Phaistos, Archanes, Rethymnon, and Chania.¹⁰¹ This shift may represent an attempt to restrict convivial practices to a certain social component. The considerable decrease in wine consumption in LM III Crete is explained by Yannis Hamilakis as an outcome of the strict control and centralization of the Mycenaean administration.¹⁰² Indeed, convivial practices and ritual meals are attested at an official level by remains of sacrifices and in depictions, in particular in frescoes, such as those from Ayia Triada—highlighting the lyre player together with the representation of stags—and possibly at Archanes.¹⁰³ In contrast to the Mycenaean evidence, in some less distinguished, advanced LM III graves, drinking activities are represented not by metalware assemblages but by elaborate, decorated ceramic dinner sets, including kraters, goblets, kylikes, deep bowls, cups, and dippers—vessel shapes that are also found in contemporary settlements.¹⁰⁴ From such evidence, banqueting can be inferred to have been more widely practiced and less strictly controlled than on the mainland, and definitely independent of a diacritical pattern of exclusivity.

In Cretan communities, in effect, even in the Monopalatial phase, and especially in LM IIIA2–B, it is quite probable that habits of communal politics were never completely limited to the private sphere of funerary feasts, and banquets continued to be celebrated in aristocratic and secular dwellings. Several sites provide evidence in support of this hypothesis. At Ayia Triada, the ritualization of convivial practices could have served to stress important secular events as well, such as the foundation of imposing

99. Cf. the ceramic assemblage from shaft II of tomb 10 at Dendra: Persson 1942, p. 59 (see also Wright, this volume, p. 145, fig. 5). In Crete, cf. Zapher Papoura, pit-graves 66 and 67 (Evans 1906, pp. 71–74). For metal sets in Crete, see in particular the Tomb of the Tripod Hearth and the Chieftain's Grave at Zapher Papoura (Evans 1906, pp. 34–35, 51–59).

100. Dietler 1996, esp. p. 106.

101. For Phaistos and Kalyvia: Savignoni 1904; *Creta antica*, pp. 136–137; Archanes: Kallitsaki 1997; Rethymnon: Markoulaki and Baxévani-

Kouzioni 1997 (Pangalochori); Papadopoulou 1997 (Armenoi); Chania: Andreadaki-Vlasaki 1997a. For warrior graves, see above, n. 75.

102. Hamilakis 1999, esp. p. 48.

103. For the frescoes, recently published from the settlement, see *Haghia Triada* I, pp. 283–308. Although of uncertain provenance, the evidence relevant to sacrifice and feasting could belong to the megaron; in this case, it would fit the palatial etiquette of ritual consumption and would be related to the ideological expressions of palatial elites. A good comparison is

the Campstool Fresco from Knossos: Cameron 1987; Immerwahr 1990, pp. 84, 176, Kn no. 26; Wright 1995a. For the sarcophagus, La Rosa 1999; for sacrifice at Archanes, Sakellarakis 1970; for literature on the subject, Borgna 1999b, p. 201.

104. Cf. Tzedakis 1988, p. 513 (Armenoi, but evidence mainly from dromoi); Phoinikia: Kanta 1980, pp. 24–25; Gournes, tomb 2: Chatzidakis 1918, pp. 76–77 (dromos); Stylos: Kanta 1980, p. 235; Milatos: Evans 1906, pp. 93–98; Kanta 1980, pp. 125–126, figs. 52, 53.

buildings.¹⁰⁵ A further example is a ceramic assemblage consisting of a kylix, stemmed conical bowl or small krater, champagne cup, small jug, two shallow cups, and many conical cups found in room D 1 at Chondros Viannou; the room had a central pillar and was possibly a banqueting hall.¹⁰⁶ In room II 2 of Quartier Nu at Mallia, sets of kylikes, champagne cups, and *kalathoi* were found, together with a stirrup jar, amphora, and krater; in a pit deposit from the same area were fragments belonging to kylikes, champagne cups, deep bowls, cups, a stirrup jar, other jars, and cooking pots mixed with ashes and coals, as well as bronze items such as a double-axe, possibly used for sacrifice.¹⁰⁷ Such evidence might be related to ritual celebrations outside the control of the central authority, as is clearer in the case of the LM IIIB–C assemblages at Phaistos.

From the record outlined above, a complex pattern of feasting and ceremonial authority, in multiple locations and with multiple purposes, is seen not only in the earlier palatial periods, but also in Final Palatial Crete. This pattern may be explained as a mark of local heritage, though the intrinsic nature and purposes of elite banquets would have been, at that time, deeply modified by Mycenaean interaction. The secular use of competitive feasts within extrapalatial social practices might already have gained force in Crete in LM II–IIIA1, thanks to both the strong Mycenaean influence and the stability and power of Cretan elites, while only after the collapse of central powers did banqueting become (possibly throughout the Aegean) a widespread occasion for ideological and political mobilization and struggle, important in creating power relationships in the new political arena of unstable systems.

CONCLUSIONS

Feasting activities in Minoan Crete were more suited than those of mainland Greece to facilitating community solidarity through widespread attendance. At the same time, toward the end of the Late Bronze Age, outside palatial contexts they became—earlier and more easily than on the mainland, where political banquets were mainly a matter of palatial control—strategic instruments of political dialogue in the hands of different aristocratic groups with common symbols and ideologies. The elite dwellings and settlements would have already borrowed from the mainland the language of commensal competitive politics during the Mycenaean domination of Crete beginning early in LM II–IIIA, when the practices

105. In the trench cut for the foundation of the stoa (“saggio III, strato VII”), a deposit of tableware together with bones and burned remains was found that was interpreted by the excavators as the remains of a meal consumed by the builders (La Rosa 1980, pp. 337–338, fig. 47; 1986, pp. 53–55, fig. 5). For evidence of a pottery deposit in association with

building foundations from the transition between the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods, see La Rosa 1980, pp. 302–306, figs. 10–12.

106. Platon 1997, pp. 362–363, 370–371.

107. Farnoux 1990; Driessen and Farnoux 1992, 1994; Farnoux 1997, p. 267.

of conspicuous consumption of wine and food gradually became a powerful means of competition and exclusion outside the control of the palatial authorities.¹⁰⁸

In LM IIIC Phaistos, as discussed above, we can attribute to the local cultural tradition the multidimensional and multipurpose occurrence of feasting as well as the important role played by food processing on ritual occasions. Nonetheless, we can also perceive a strong Mycenaean cultural component at work in highly competitive convivial occasions, the function of which was to create hierarchical relationships and dependencies and legitimize the status quo.

The complex variety in place, nature, and function of Cretan convivial ceremonies seems detectable even in Postpalatial and Dark Age Crete. As emerges from the framework proposed by Alexander Mazarakis Ainian,¹⁰⁹ the layout of several Subminoan and Protogeometric settlements points to a complex variety of independent religious and secular buildings, as at Kavousi, Karphi, and possibly Kephala Vasilikis and Chalasmenos, where these changes are already apparent in LM IIIC.¹¹⁰ Ritual equipment, including artifacts connected with feasting, appears to differ according to cultic or political and social functions,¹¹¹ thus demonstrating that ceremonial performances and display were encoded in a structured and shared ideology. Furthermore, within some settlements ceremonial evidence derives from several houses, possibly belonging to different, albeit equal, emerging social groups. A multicentered pattern of political authority is suggested by the topographically marginal location of some aristocratic buildings, which had to contend with other buildings for a central social position—illustrated, for example, by the Geometric house at Phaistos, recently interpreted as a kind of *andreion*.¹¹² The framework of Dark Age settlements on the mainland is completely different and much simpler, as demonstrated by the case of Nichoria. There, a single major building, possibly having both religious and political functions, rose above the other undifferentiated houses at the beginning of the Dark Age period and gradually increased in importance and authority.¹¹³

On the subject of banquets the Homeric world offers fruitful comparisons to the Cretan evidence. Different types of banquets existed in discrete spheres of social exchange and served distinct strategies of power mobilization, involving both the maintenance of the status quo and competition for definition of status.¹¹⁴ Comparison with the Homeric world is valid if we consider that Postpalatial and Dark Age societies, on the one hand, and Homeric society, on the other, are all characterized by social groups founded on aggregations of male warriors, and supporting domi-

108. For the importance of local elites in Late Bronze Age Crete, see, e.g., Shelmerdine 1999, p. 564. For the mobilization of power by local elites in Neopalatial Crete, cf. Christakis 1999.

109. Mazarakis Ainian 1997.

110. For Kavousi and Karphi in particular, see Mazarakis Ainian 1997, pp. 208–210, 218–220; Nowicki 2000,

pp. 97–99, 157–164; on Vronta, Kavousi, see also Day 1997. On the cultic complex at Kephala Vasilikis, including an articulated cluster of rooms, each related to different functions, see Eliopoulos 1998; on Chalasmenos, see Tsipopoulou 2001.

111. In general, see Rehak and Younger 2001, pp. 460–461.

112. Mazarakis Ainian 1997, pp. 228–229, 273; cf. Cucuzza 1998; 2000, pp. 298–303.

113. Mazarakis Ainian 1997, p. 74; Coulson 1983, p. 18; McDonald and Coulson 1983, p. 328.

114. See esp. van Wees 1995; Raaflaub 1997, p. 643; Sherratt, this volume.

nant individuals.¹¹⁵ These individuals, the “big men” or chiefs, employed the practice of holding communal banquets as a means of attracting consent, maintaining cohesion, forming alliances, or striving for dominance among equal individuals or *oikoi*. At Phaistos, as I stated above, only increased field research will determine whether the banquets held on the summit of the Acropoli Mediana and in the multiroomed building of the Casa a ovest del Piazzale I represented expressions of confrontation and competition among homogeneous social elements or, by serving different social and political purposes, were signs of an articulated system within a structured and complex community such as we find later in the Homeric world.

In a number of Cretan settlements dating to the transition between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, evidence for similar feasting practices has been recognized underneath later temples and sanctuaries as well as public and political buildings. On the one hand, the evidence from LM III Prinias makes it especially clear that the sites occupied by Archaic temples had sometimes been, in LM III, open areas devoted to activities of ritual consumption.¹¹⁶ The Acropoli Mediana at Phaistos could be relevant in this regard, particularly given hints of the existence of an Archaic temple on the top of the hill.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, rulers’ dwellings in Dark Age and Geometric Crete may have carried on roles and functions of previous buildings, including the custom of communal feasting. The so-called aristocratic *andreion* of Geometric Phaistos could be a direct successor of the elite LM IIIC buildings or *oikoi* located in the nearby area, such as the Casa a ovest.

In closing, I stress again the importance of using pottery style to monitor social and ideological relationships within the framework of use and circulation of drinking vessels for ritual consumption. On the basis of the stylistic elaboration of ceramic sets, it is possible to follow the political development of Cretan societies to the end of the Bronze Age and into the beginning of the Iron Age. The stylistic display and decoration of LM IIIC vessels suitable for distribution (kraters) and individual consumption (deep bowls) reflect the openness of the communities and the strong interaction between givers and receivers within the social arena of feasts, in which intense social and ideological exchanges took place in order to create and modify social relationships. In later contexts, and more clearly during the Middle Protogeometric period, stylistic limitation and exclusion especially affected the minor vessels used for individual consumption. Thus deep bowls and cups are now completely coated or dipped, while the huge kraters, symbols of central distribution, are highly decorated.¹¹⁸ Such transformation of the drinking sets could be a consequence of both a major change in feasting habits—no longer involving competition in order to attract and recruit followers and retainers—and a political transition toward more fixed and structured social organizations.¹¹⁹

115. Rowlands 1980, p. 21; Mazarakis Ainian 1997, pp. 358–372; Donlan and Thomas 1993; Donlan 1985, 1989, 1994, 1997a, 1997b.

116. Pernier 1914, pp. 25–29, 73, fig. 40 (top left); Mazarakis Ainian 1997, pp. 224–226, esp. p. 226; on recent research, Palermo 1999. For deposits with ashes, animal bones, and pottery, see the recent evidence from refuge settlements such as Pefki Kastelolopoulo and Arvi Fortetsa: Nowicki 1994, pp. 250–253; Nowicki 1996, p. 264; 2000, p. 239.

117. La Rosa 1997.

118. For instance at Knossos, North Cemetery: Coldstream and Catling 1996, vol. 1, pp. 7–8, 239–253 (tombs E, F), 285; vol. 2, pp. 368, 378; cf. Popham 1992 for Subminoan finds. For Protogeometric “crockery for a funerary symposium,” including a decorated krater and monochrome skyphoi: Coldstream 2002, pp. 215–216, pls. 13 (6.13), 14 (6.16–18). For the meaningful shift at Protogeometric Kavousi, see Gesell, Day, and Coulson 1995. See also D’Agata 1999, pp. 197–204, for monochrome deep bowls in settlement assemblages from LM IIIC (late) onward.

119. Cf., e.g., Mazarakis Ainian 1997, p. 358.

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