

## EVIDENCE FOR A MYCENAEAN TOMB OF THE LATE HELLADIC IIA PERIOD IN THE ATHENIAN AGORA

IN connection with a re-study of the area of the Mycenaean stairway on the north-east slope of the Athenian Acropolis in the fall and winter of 1973, I had occasion to examine and study the deposits of Mycenaean settlement material from the Agora recently published by Professor Sara A. Immerwahr.<sup>1</sup> One of these deposits consists of a sizeable group of pottery found in the dromos of Tomb XII.<sup>2</sup> As Mrs. Immerwahr has observed, the shape range of this material is domestic rather than funerary. The deposit is datable to a late phase of Late Helladic IIIB or a very early one of Late Helladic IIIC, to a time significantly later than the period of use of the vast majority of the Agora chamber tombs. Professor Immerwahr is surely right in concluding that this material cannot be connected with the use of the tomb and that it is probably domestic refuse dumped into the dromos of the tomb some time after the latter was dug. The irregularity of the tomb and its lack of contents have led her to suggest that it was never used, perhaps because it collapsed while being cut.

However, among the two hundred or so sherds of uninventoried pottery from the tomb are nineteen small fragments belonging to three vases of a much earlier period. The exact provenience within the tomb of these sherds is uncertain, but it is quite possible that they are among the few fragments of pottery noted in three small clusters during the tomb's excavation. These sherds were recorded within the tomb chamber at a level of *ca.* 0.75 m. below the bedrock surface in this area when a scatter of field stones appeared. Below this level, a fill of collapsed bedrock 1.20 m. deep which yielded virtually no pottery was excavated down to the presumed floor of the chamber.<sup>3</sup>

All three vases were almost certainly tomb offerings, but it is by no means sure that they belong to the grave goods of the tomb in which they were found. Extensive

<sup>1</sup> *The Athenian Agora*, XIII, *The Neolithic and Bronze Ages*, Princeton, 1971. I would like to thank Professors Immerwahr and T. L. Shear, Jr., Director of the Agora Excavations, for permission to study this material and to draw the vases illustrated in this article, as well as for reading this manuscript and making several helpful suggestions. I am particularly grateful to Professor Immerwahr for examining the vases with me in May 1974 and for talking over the problems involved in their interpretation.

<sup>2</sup> *Agora*, XIII, pp. 196-199. The uninventoried material from this tomb is stored in Lot N 194 in the basement of the Stoa of Attalos.

<sup>3</sup> The tomb was excavated in 1952 by Dr. Rebecca Wood (Robinson). The three small sherd groups noted by her may very well correspond to the three different vases which the preserved L. H. II sherds represent.

disturbance in this general area in the Classical and later periods must have destroyed a number of Mycenaean tombs whose scattered contents alone attest their original presence.<sup>4</sup> If the preserved fragments are indeed the sherds from the area of the chamber noted by the excavator, it is just as likely that they are debris from elsewhere which fell into the tomb as that they are fragments of the original contents of Tomb XII, since they were found at a level over one meter above the chamber floor.<sup>5</sup> Thus these fragments do not prove that Tomb XII was in fact a finished and used chamber tomb, although they now make that a possibility.

The chief interest of the three vases lies in their date, for the bridge-spouted jug No. 2 unquestionably belongs to the Late Helladic IIA period and the other two vases may be equally early. This is the earliest group of Mycenaean pottery from the area of the later Agora, and it furnishes evidence for the earliest use of the Mycenaean cemetery there. The initial use of this cemetery now corresponds well with the earliest substantial evidence of Mycenaean occupation on the Acropolis.<sup>6</sup>

The three vases in question from Tomb XII are:<sup>7</sup>

1. (P 30669). Squat jug. Fig. 1.

P. H. of composite profile 0.061, est. Diam. of body 0.110 m. Complete handle and portions of the body preserving the middle of the vessel profile. Mended from six sherds into three non-joining fragments.

Flat vertical strap handle narrows in width

towards base. Large splash of paint around the top of the upper handle attachment; two oblique bars on the back of the handle.

Fine clay with a fair number of very fine dark grits and some mica. Light brown fracture over most of core becoming lighter near both surfaces; very pale brown to white unpainted

<sup>4</sup> The fine vases found in the Mycenaean "gully" in front of the Northeast Stoa must come from disturbed chamber tombs (*Agora*, XIII, p. 248). Badly disturbed but still identifiable chamber tombs include VIII-X and XXV-XXVI. Lot N 194 containing the pottery from Tomb XII includes a single post-Mycenaean piece, a black-glazed body sherd. There is, of course, no reason why Tomb XII, if it was ever used, could not have been disturbed well before the Classical period. The large quantity of late L. B. IIIB or early L. H. IIIC pottery from the dromos indicates that there was non-funerary activity in the area already in the late Mycenaean period, and the tomb might easily have been plundered then. At the very least, the provenience of this pottery indicates that the dromos was for some reason open at this period.

<sup>5</sup> The Agora chamber tombs tend to cluster in groups of two or more, and thus it is likely that there was originally at least one more tomb in the vicinity of Tomb XII, which now appears as an isolated grave (*Agora*, XIII, pl. 91, J 10:1).

<sup>6</sup> *Agora*, XIII, p. 150. The earliest Mycenaean vases published by Immerwahr are no earlier than L. H. IIB.

<sup>7</sup> Only those features of shape and decoration not readily visible in the drawings are listed in the catalogue entries. The drawings, for which I would like to thank Sarah Rutter, represent partially composite and partially restored profiles, the restored portions being indicated in broken lines. Linear decoration is assumed to be continuous around the entire vase. Patterned decoration is indicated in full where preserved and in outline where restored; the patterns on the upper body zone of No. 2 and on the miniature vase No. 3 are only indicated as preserved, since their restoration is uncertain. The colors used to describe clay and paint are those used in the *Munsell Soil Color Charts*, Baltimore, 1971.

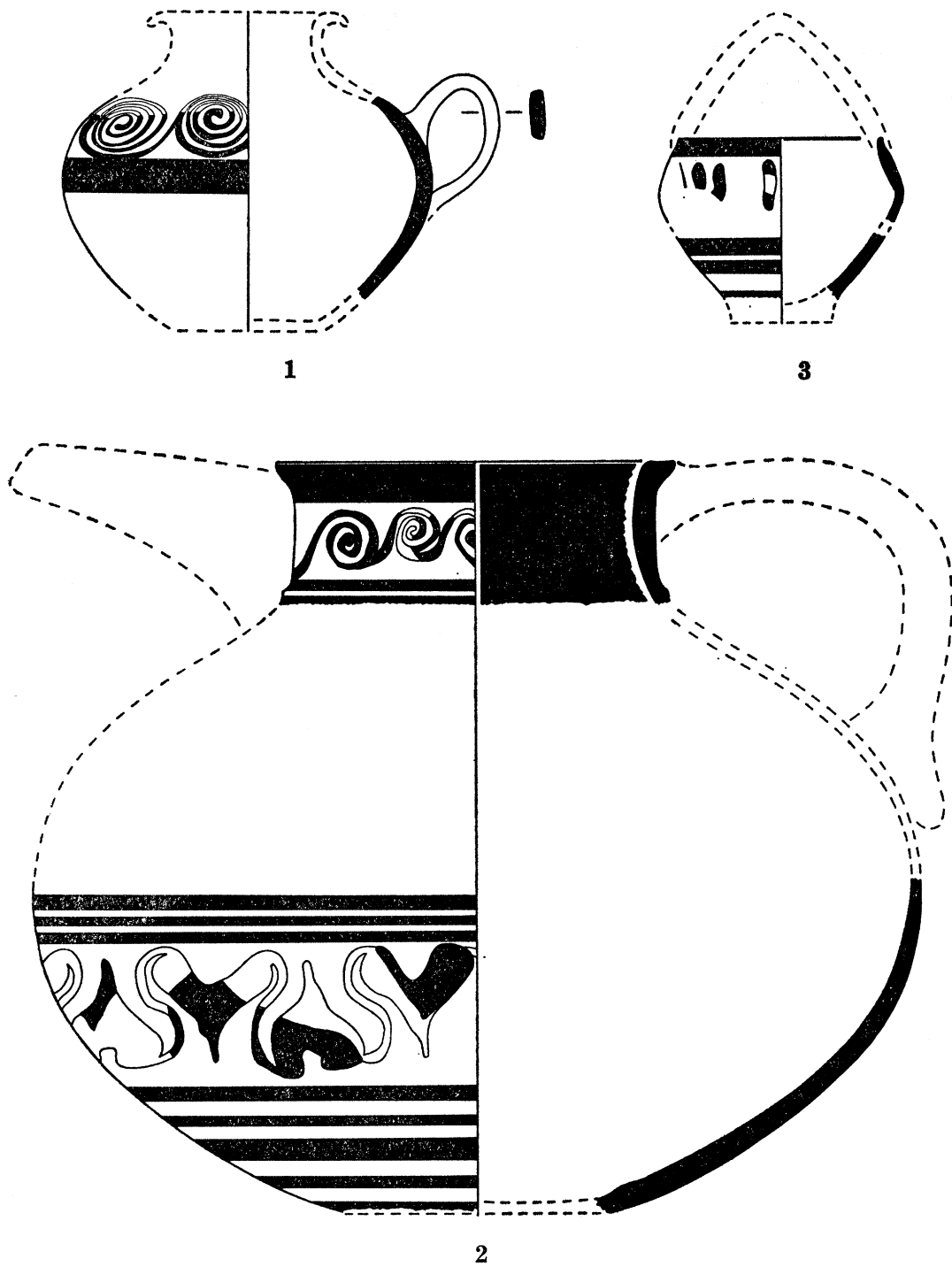


FIG. 1. Scale 1:2

surface; dark reddish brown to black paint. Polished.

A. Furumark, *The Mycenaean Pottery: Analysis and Classification*, Stockholm, 1941, Type 87, Motive 46. For this shape with similar decoration, C. W. Blegen, *Prosymna*, Cambridge, 1937, figs. 110 no. 214, 683 no. 562, 226 no. 1180. For discussions of the shape, Furumark, *op. cit.*, p. 598; Blegen, *op. cit.*, pp. 389-390, 400, 415-416. The only other example of this shape from the Agora is of L. H. IIB date: *Agora*, XIII, p. 184, VII-1, pl. 39.

Both shape and decoration are common in L. H. I and II. There is no reason to date this piece earlier than L. H. II.

2. (P 30670). Bridge-spouted jug. Fig. 1.

Est. Diam. of rim 0.120, est. Diam. of body 0.265 m. One rim sherd, one neck fragment, one handle fragment, ten sherds from the lower body, and one base fragment are preserved; no two sherds join.

Thick vertical strap handle with deeply concave back. Spaced blobs decorate the reserved lip; the handle fragment preserves horizontal bars on the concave back and traces of a thick and a thin band running along one side; there is a trace of an indeterminable pattern in the upper body zone.

Fine micaceous clay with some fine and medium dark red grits. Light red fracture, pink interior surface, very pale brown unpainted exterior surface; paint varies from red to black. Polished.

Furumark, *Mycenaean Pottery*, Type 103, Motives 46 on neck and 12, no. 5 on lower body. For shape parallels, Furumark, *op. cit.*, p. 601; Blegen, *Prosymna*, figs. 187 no. 375, 665 nos. 1004, 1034; J. N. Coldstream and G. L. Huxley, *Kythera*, London, 1972, p. 132,  $\mu$  41-44, pls. 33-34; A. W. Persson, *New Tombs at*

*Dendra near Midea*, Lund, 1942, pp. 42-43, fig. 47, 1; G. Welter, *Aigina*, Berlin, 1938, fig. 29. For discussions of the shape, Blegen, *op. cit.*, pp. 401-402; Coldstream and Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

The shape is typical of L. H. IIA, although Furumark assigns two examples of his closely similar Type 104 to L. H. IIB. His grounds for dating the Type 104 jug from Aliki to L. H. IIB rather than to L. H. IIA are unclear; this is the only other example of the early Mycenaean bridge-spouted jug form besides the Agora vase to come from Attica, and like No. 2 it has two body zones. The solid leaves in the early form of Ivy Spray on the lower body of No. 2 confirm a L. H. IIA date for the the Agora piece.

3. (P 30668). Miniature vase. Fig. 1.

Est. Diam. of rim 0.06, est. Diam. of body 0.075 m. One rim fragment and a non-joining sherd from the lower body are preserved.

Fine micaceous clay with occasional fine white grits. Reddish yellow fracture and interior surface; unpainted exterior surface varies from reddish yellow to very pale brown; dark red to red paint. Polished.

Furumark, *Mycenaean Pottery*, Type 158(?), Motive 67(?). For a possible shape parallel on which the restored drawing presented here is based,  $\Delta\epsilon\lambda\tau.$ , XIX B, 1964, pl. 325, a, right. L. Dor, J. Jannoray, H. and M. van Effenterre, *Kirrhra*, Paris, 1960, p. 137, no. 70, pl. LI. For the general type, Furumark, *op. cit.*, p. 609.

The identification of the shape of this piece is tentative. The very slight lip appears to rule out the possibility of its being a cup. The parallel from Aghios Ilias in Aitolokarnania is fairly close, and the date of the Agora piece should be within L. H. II.

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