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Tracking the Cooking Pot *à la stéatite*: Signs of Cyprus in Iron Age Syria

KATHLEEN BIRNEY

Abstract

The cooking pot à la stéatite first appears at sites along the Syrian coast in the 12th century. Until recently, these cooking pots were considered an essentially Iron I coastal phenomenon with a few isolated appearances inland. New research indicates that these cooking pots can actually be tracked throughout Iron I and II as they penetrated inland Syria by way of the Orontes River, ultimately to become one of the dominant cooking pot forms of the later Iron Age. Both technological and stylistic elements of even the earliest variants show a strong relationship with Cypriot cooking wares; moreover, its distribution is largely consistent with the distribution of locally produced Mycenaeanstyle pottery in Syria. This study explores the Aegean relationships of the cooking pot à la stéatite and addresses the question of the Sea Peoples and Cypriot immigrants in Iron Age Syria.*

INTRODUCTION

The cooking pot à *la stéatite* (fig. 1), first documented in Iron I levels at Ras Ibn Hani, takes its name from the distinctive fabric used there in its manufacture. The fabric is a mix of gray clay and steatite temper, known before this time only from the Maison aux Albâtres at Late Bronze Age (LBA) Ras Shamra, where it was used in the production of three large "cauldrons."¹ At Ras Ibn Hani, however, the cauldrons do not appear; the fabric is used only to make the holemouth cooking pots and thick, low-rimmed plates, possibly baking trays.²

This same holemouth cooking pot, in a similar steatite and gray clay fabric, was subsequently recognized in Iron Age contexts at other Levantine coastal sites. Here it was referred to instead as the band-handled cooking pot (BHCP), in reference to its distinctive flat handles. This is indeed a much more appropriate moniker for these vessels. The epithet à la stéatite is somewhat misleading in that it places too much emphasis on what was in reality an ephemeral temper, occurring only briefly in the lifespan of the form, rather than focusing on other more consistent stylistic and typological features that better define both the nature and the function of the vessel. These other features persisted and were preserved for centuries and as such are much more helpful in the classification of the cooking pot while also providing some hints at its origins. The cooking pot à la stéatite, therefore, should best be considered a subset of a larger BHCP class that boasts a unique set of diagnostic features.

BASIC TRAITS

Table 1 summarizes the basic morphological and technological characteristics typical of the BHCP. The most obvious features are the distinctive gray fabric, thin band handles,³ and the rounded holemouth shape (fig. 2). While some visible changes occur over time (e.g., an increase in globularity, the beveling of the

^{*} The author would like to thank Tim Harrison, Marina Pucci, David Schloen, and Lynn Swartz-Dodd for their gracious permission to examine the unpublished assemblages from the Amuq sites of Tell Tayinat, Chatal Höyük, and Tell Judaidah for dissertation work. Thanks are also due to Klaas Vansteenhuyse and his associates at Tell Tweini for permission to present some of their petrographic data here.

¹Lagarce and Lagarce 1974, 8; Bounni et al. 1979, 255.

²Lagarce and Lagarce 1974, 8.

³ A holemouth cooking pot appears together with the BHCPs in this same Iron I–II range at Syrian sites. Apart from the absence of band handles, it shares the same stylistic and typological features as the BHCPs (fabric, temper, slip, and surface treatment, occasional incised or impressed decoration). The two types appear together even from the outset of their appearance in the Levant at Ras Ibn Hani (Bounni et al. 1979, fig. 27.1). Venturi (2000, 528) and the excavators of Tell Afis acknowledge the similarities between the BHCP and the coastal cooking pot *à la stéatite* yet assign the holemouth

cooking pots to the lineage of holemouth vessels known from LBA Porsuk. The Porsuk cooking pots appear both in the typical local cooking fabric and a "sandy" ware, the latter sharing some characteristics of the BHCP's gray ware (in the use of dark slip and occasional polish). However, the fabric and construction of the Porsuk vessels is more consistent with coarsely crafted handmade burnished ware or Anatolian coarse wares (e.g., irregularly oxidatized, handmade from coils, highly burnished) than with the thinner-walled Iron Age holemouth pots or BHCPs. The additional presence of nubs and lug attachments on some of the Porsuk vessels is further evidence of their place in the handmade burnished ware tradition. The relationship between the BHCPs and handmade burnished ware is explored in greater detail below; however, the divergent processes by which the Porsuk vessels and the Iron Age holemouths discussed here are manufactured strongly suggest that the two are not directly related. In establishing the distribution of the BHCP form here, however, a site was only included if the handled form is present.



Fig. 1. The cooking pot *à la stéatite*, Early Iron I, from Ras Ibn Hani (Bounni et al. 1979, fig. 27.1).

rim), both the form itself and the technology of manufacture remain essentially consistent over several centuries.⁴ At some point during Iron II, production of the BHCP shifted to include the use of other local orange or beige cooking fabrics, in addition to the continued use of conventional gray. The exact point of transition is difficult to discern, as the vessels frequently appear in site publications without an attending description of the paste. It is interesting to note, however, that when the lighter fabrics were used, it appears to have been fairly common practice to employ a darker slip, perhaps in an effort to make these vessels more closely resemble the familiar gray ware form.⁵

Steatite temper is attested only in the BHCPs from Ras Ibn Hani and Tell Sukas. At these sites, the proportion of steatite in the ware gradually decreased over time, such that by Iron II, the pots were produced in "typical" clay, of which no further description is given. However, petrographic analysis was conducted on several of the vessels from nearby Tell Tweini, where the BHCPs appear in Iron Age levels after a gap following the Late Bronze Age (LBA) occupation. The study of the Tweini fabrics revealed the use of primarily shell temper with some mineral inclusions such as feldspar, quartz, and pyroxene, and on rare occasions sandstone or quartzite. This mix provides a degree of heat conductivity quite different from that of the LBA cauldrons from Ras Shamra and the steatite-tempered cooking pots from Ras Ibn Hani; it seems, instead, consistent with the tempers appearing in BHCPs from inland sites. It may be relevant that in LBA levels at Tweini, a larger cauldronlike vessel with rounded vertical handles and showing signs of exterior burnish was attested. The fabric of this vessel has a heavy temper of metamorphic rocks, a mixture that approximates the function of steatite temper, and it has been suggested that these may be related to the LBA cauldrons known from Ras Shamra.⁶ If this holds true, the break between the LBA and Iron occupations at Tell Tweini argues against continuity between the heavily tempered cauldrons and the BHCP. It may be that the transition from steatite to nonsteatite temper witnessed in the BHCPs at Ras Ibn Hani and Tell Sukas may not reflect a simple substitution for more easily obtainable materials but instead a clear break in culinary practices.

IRON I-II DISTRIBUTION

The BHCP has largely been regarded as a Syrian coastal phenomenon, thought to disappear after the 10th century.⁷ However, the form—uniformly expressed with the set of typological and technological features described above—actually continued in use for centuries, even to the very end of the Iron Age. Its use can be tracked inland systematically from the late 12th and early 11th centuries onward, from the Syrian coast as far east as the western Euphrates, where it became one of the dominant cooking pot forms of Iron IIB–C (table 2).

Unfortunately, we have little information regarding the quantities of BHCPs from each site. The convention of publishing only representative forms without statistical analysis (as at Tarsus) renders this kind of reconstruction difficult. We can note, however, that at the sites of Chatal Höyük and Tell Judaidah, the BHCP makes up roughly 45% of the collected cooking ware sherds in Iron I (Amuq phase N) contexts, and more than 50% of the collected cooking ware sherds from Iron II (Amuq phase O) contexts.⁸ In the Syrian interior, therefore, it is clear that from the early 11th century on, the BHCP was more than a sporadic presence. By the eighth and seventh centuries, the BHCP had become one of the most common cooking vessels of greater Syria.9 So broad, in fact, is the distribution of the form in Iron IIC and later that it is beyond the

⁴The Abou Danné publication presents the most detailed overview of the internal development of the holemouth/bandhandled form during Iron II–III (Lebeau 1983, 270–71).

⁵As observed in the Amuq collection from the Braidwood Syrian Expedition, housed at the University of Chicago.

⁶ K. Vansteenhuyse, pers. comm. 2005; see also Bretschneider et al. 2005.

⁷C.f. Bonatz 1993, 135.

⁸ Based on personal examination of several hundreds of

sherds from each site. While the collection practices of the Braidwood Syrian Expedition of the 1930s were not specified, collection bias from this period would likely have given preference to painted wares rather than these rather unattractive sherds. The high numbers of these and other utilitarian sherds collected, while not guaranteeing the accuracy of the proportions stated above, certainly show that the coarse wares were at least not markedly neglected.

⁹Lehmann 1998, 13.

Feature	Iron I	Iron II–III
Rim	simple holemouth; slight collar (rare)	beveled rim, increasing inward turn
Body	round base prevalent; round body with straighter walls	round base prevalent; increasing globularity
Handles	very thin (0.4–1.2 cm) vertical band handles with concave center; 0, 1, 2, or 4 handles; attachment at rim; occasional single band of incised, impressed, or slashed appliqué decoration on shoulder; incised chevrons on handles	thin, vertical band handles with concave center; only 0–2 handles attested; attachment at or below the rim; incised/ impressed decoration more common; frequency of handle decoration decreases
Fabric	gray ware (ranging from light gray to grayish black); steatite temper (very early only), predominantly grit, stone, shell tempers	both gray ware and standard cooking fabrics used; grit, stone, shell tempers
Construction	hand- and wheelmade (contemporary)	hand- and wheelmade
Surface treatment	self-slip; wet-smoothed; grass-wiping (rarely); irregular soft polish ^a	self-slip or occasional use of dark gray slip when non-gray wares were used; wet-smoothing continues; soft polishing unattested

Table 1. Features of the Band-Handled Cooking Pot by Iron Period.

^a Soft burnishing or polishing is the practice of rubbing a pot gently with grass or cloth, which leaves the exterior lusterless and only faintly marked; this is to be distinguished from hard burnishing, where a hard implement is used to scratch with some force across the body of a vessel, yielding a lustrous, highly polished sheen

scope of this article to produce an exhaustive list of all the sites at which it appears.¹⁰ It should suffice here to note that the eastern boundary of its distribution is the western bank of the Euphrates, at the sites of Tell Ahmar, Tell Jurn Kabir, and Tell Sheikh Hassan. For the present, 'Ain Dara seems to mark the northernmost expansion, and it may reach as far south as Hama.¹¹

Stages of Inland Expansion

Once paired, the geographic and chronological data indicate at least three, or possibly four, stages of expansion in the inland diffusion of the BHCP. The first stage describes the vessels' initial appearance on the Syrian coast near the beginning of what is conventionally termed Iron I (fig. 3). This begins at Ras Ibn Hani and presumably expands from there to the nearby sites of Tell Daruk, Tell Sukas, and Tell Tweini.¹² To the north, there is at least one example that appears at Tarsus in the Early Iron Age levels, roughly contemporary with stage 1. Given its absence from nearby sites, the BHCP does not appear to have made significant

¹⁰ Thorough studies of the distribution of the BHCP (though not identified as such) in the Late Iron Age and post–Iron Age can be found in Lebeau 1983; Lehmann 1998.

inroads in the Cilician plain; however, apart from Tarsus and Mersin, most information regarding the Cilician plain during this period stems from survey rather than excavation,¹³ and as such it may be premature to draw any conclusion.



Fig. 2. Band-handled cooking pot from Tell Ahmar, levels 3–2a (Jamieson 2000, fig. 11).

marked in Lehmann's (1998) survey.

¹¹ The vessel type is not documented by Riis (1990) but is

¹²Buhl 1983, 115.

¹³E.g., Gjerstad 1934; Garstang 1938; Seton-Williams 1954; Salmeri et al. 2002.

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Site	Date	References
Ras Ibn Hani	mid 12th century	Bounni et al. 1979, 251–52, figs. 27.1, 27.2, 28
Tell Sukas	Early Iron I (based on Ras Ibn Hani comparanda)	Buhl 1983, 115, fig. 9, no. 97
Tell Daruk	Late Iron I–Hellenistic (levels 16–19) ^a	Oldenburg and Rohweder 1981, 43
Tell Tweini	Iron I (following a gap in occupation)	Bretschneider et al. 2005
Ras el-Bassit (unconfirmed)	unclear	Badre 2003, fig. 7.3
Beirut (unconfirmed)	with Mycenaean IIIA2–B sherds	Badre 2003, 95
Tarsus	12th century? (Early Iron Age)	Hanfmann 1950, 182, nos. 217 (T.38.623), 218 (T38.624, T38.624a)
Chatal Höyük	phases N–O (1150–600 B.C.E.)	Swift 1958, 130, 137; personal study
Tell Judaidah	phases N–O (1150–600 B.C.E.)	Swift 1958, 130, 137; personal study
Tell Tayinat ^b	phases N–O (1150–600 B.C.E.)	personal study
Tell Afis	1050/1000-550 B.C.E.	Mazzoni 1987, pls. 12.22, 12.30
Tell Qarqur	Early Iron II (11th–10th centuries)	Dornemann 2000, 473, fig. 17
'Ain Dara	1000-?	Stone and Zimansky 1999, 65, fig. 74.6–8
Tell Abou Danné	Iron II–III	Lebeau 1983, MM nos. 1–7
Tell Mastuma	ca. 850–?	Wakita et al. 2000, 553, figs. 10.7, 10.8
Tell Ahmar	Iron II–III	Jamieson 1999, 288–89, figs. 5.1, 5.3
Tell Jurn Kabir	Iron II–III	Eidem and Ackermann 1999, 313, fig. 9b.19
Tell Sheikh Hassan	ca. 850–500	Schneider 1999, 328–30 (Type 15), fig. 9.1

Table 2. Iron I-II Distribution of the Band-Handled Cooking Pot from the Coast Inland.

^aTextual description shows they begin in level 14; the typological chart indicates they begin in level 16 (Oldenburg and Rohweder 1981, 71, table 13)

^b This reflects only the materials from the original Syrian expedition, not the renewed Tayinat excavations

In stage 2, the BHCP next appears to move from its foothold on the Syrian coast up the Orontes River, where it appears in sizeable quantities in the Amuq Valley sites of Chatal Höyük, Tell Judaidah, and Tell Tayinat in levels corresponding to Late Iron I (fig. 4). In stage 3, the beginning of Iron IIA, the form appears to have expanded both southward along the Orontes to the sites of Tell Afis and Tell Qarqur and also to the northeast, to 'Ain Dara and Tell Mastuma (fig. 5). Finally in stage 4, roughly corresponding to Iron IIB and C, there is an eastward expansion to the Euphrates (fig. 6). BHCPs are also reported to appear



Fig. 3. Stage 1 distribution (shaded area) of the band-handled cooking pot, Early–Middle Iron I (adapted from Hausleiter and Reiche 1999, fig. 1).

in limited quantities during the eighth century (and later) at Tell Kazel, Al Mina, Tell Keisan, Tell Arqa, and even as far south as Hazor.¹⁴ A lone example from Ashkelon, dating to the seventh century, was shown by petrographic analysis to have been manufactured in northern Syria.¹⁵

ORIGINS AND ETHNICITY

The site survey and trend data demonstrate how the popular BHCP of Iron II (and later) Syria seems to have developed from the Iron I coastal cooking pot *à la stéatite*. While this study illuminates the many descendants of that vessel, it does little to address the ancestry of the cooking pot *à la stéatite* itself. Produced in a form and fabric quite distinct from prior local traditions, the cooking pot *à la stéatite* appeared rather suddenly on the coast of Syria in the 12th century. What do we know of its origins and the origins of the people who used it?

When the distribution of the BHCP was believed to have been only in the area of Ras Ibn Hani, Bonatz and Caubet separately proposed that the BHCP be seen as an element of local Syrian culture. Despite that the cooking pot itself has no LBA precedent in Syria (or apparently elsewhere in the Near East), the mere use of steatite temper in the cauldrons from Ras Shamra and in some of the early versions of the BHCP at Ras Ibn Hani was taken as evidence of local continuity. It was at this point termed a Syrian coastal phenomenon, disappearing after the 10th century (although perhaps with some isolated examples of the form appearing inland in a different ware).¹⁶

The broad distribution and geographic trajectory outlined above should certainly dispel the notion that the BHCP is a limited coastal phenomenon. As to its Syrian heritage, the simple use of steatite temper in three cauldrons at Ras Shamra and in some early variants of the BHCP does little to prove that the bandhandled form represents a broad coastal tradition. And indeed, if the straight-sided jars from LBA Tell Tweini are after all comparable to the "cauldrons" from Ras Shamra, the break in occupation between

¹⁴Lebeau 1983, 424–25.

¹⁵D. Master, pers. comm. 2005.

¹⁶Caubet 1992, 127; Bonatz 1993, 135.



Fig. 4. Stage 2 distribution (dark shaded area) of the band-handled cooking pot, Middle–Late Iron I and Early Iron II. Light shaded area indicates initial (stage 1) area of distribution (adapted from Hausleiter and Reiche 1999, fig. 1).

the LBA and Iron occupations at Tweini (after which the BHCPs appeared) would likewise seem to contradict any assumption of continuity. Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that the band-handled form has no known precedents either in coastal Syria or nearby Levantine sites.

Buhl proposed that the BHCPs found at Sukas, Daruk, and Ras Ibn Hani might be traced to Cyprus, noting a reference to a band-handled pot found in 11th-century Tomb 1 at Salamis (fig. 7).¹⁷ This vessel clearly shares many of the features of the BHCP, including a similar fabric: it is described as "handmade, grayish brown with large particles, the surface is mottled brown/grey... [with] traces of smoothing."¹⁸ There are a few potential problems with this particular connection. The most obvious of these is that the Salamis tomb dates to the 11th century, and therefore this pot is slightly later than the earliest appearance of the band-handled pot in Syria. Moreover, the other items in Tomb 1 at Salamis were considered either Phoenician imports or local imitations of Phoenician imports. The tomb even held a jar burial quite similar to one seen at Tell Sukas.¹⁹ It is thus impossible to determine whether this is a Cypriot pot buried in a Phoenician tomb or a Phoenician pot buried in a Cypriot (or Phoenician) tomb. While the Salamis example should by no means be disregarded, we cannot conclusively draw an arrow from West to East on this basis alone.

Further research has shown, however, that Buhl was correct to look to Cyprus. The best and most exact parallels for the band-handled pot come from the site of Myrtou-Pigadhes on the northern coast of Cyprus (fig. 8). Here the cooking pot appears in levels VI–VII, spanning the period from the 13th century until the destruction of the sanctuary in 1175 (thus predating the first appearance of the vessels at Ras Ibn Hani). These vessels are both hand- and wheelmade, with a fabric ranging from black to brownish gray to gray or dull red with chaff or mica tempers. Their exteriors are finger smoothed or occasionally grass wiped.²⁰

¹⁷Buhl 1983, 115.

¹⁸Yon 1969, 27, pl. 19.51.

¹⁹Buhl 1983, 115.

²⁰Catling 1957, 32, esp. figs. 60.109, 60.120, 60.126.



Fig. 5. Stage 3 distribution (dark shaded area) of the band-handled cooking pot, Iron IIA–B. Light shaded area indicates initial (stage 1) area of distribution (adapted from Hausleiter and Reiche 1999, fig. 1).

Some of them bear the vertical incisions on the concave band handles, presaging the decorative trend common on the band-handled pots from Tell Sukas and Tell Daruk (as well as on the isolated variant example from Tarsus) that continues to appear even on some inland forms.

Although the Myrtou examples provide the most exact parallels, there appear to be numerous variants of the band-handled form from many Cypriot sites, both in the preceding LBA and well into the Cypro-Archaic period. Several examples appear in Late Cycladic (LC) II through Cypro-Geometric II levels at Hala Sultan Tekke, all band-handled forms, although a few have slightly thickened or short everted rims. There are also some coarse monochrome cooking pot sherds with appliqué at the site.²¹ LBA examples appear in courtyard deposits at Athienou.²² A Cypro-Geometric I variant

²¹Åström et al. 1977, 112, figs. 45, 56.

with slight collar was published from Bamboula/Kourion.²³ Numerous Cypro-Geometric II–III examples appear from Amathus and Kaloriziki. All have simple or "contracted" rims and two vertical handles on the body. Late examples (Cypro-Classic IB) also appear at Vouni.²⁴ At all these sites, the ware, where described, is Cypriot coarse ware, most often grayish brown or blackish, albeit with a few reddish variants.²⁵ Thus, these Cypriot cooking pots, spanning the 13th through the fifth centuries B.C.E., predate and then parallel the use of the vessel in Syria.

Handmade Burnished Ware?

Badre proposed that the cooking pot *à la stéatite* might be related to handmade burnished ware (HBW) because of some similarities in their coarse fabric and because both seem to appear on the Syrian coast in

²² Of particular note are "miniature" versions of the BHCP that appear among the many ritual vessels (both miniatures and normal sized) deposited in the courtyard of the LBA temple at Athienou, level III (16th–13th centuries B.C.E.). The miniature BHCPs are handmade in Cypriot coarse ware and

have incisions around the rim, a feature unique to this form despite the presence of other coarse ware cups and bowls in the courtyard (Dothan and Ben-Tor 1983, 139–40, fig. 42.11).

²³Benson 1972, 103, pl. 28.

²⁴ Benson 1972, 315, pl. 103.

²⁵Gjerstad et al. 1934, 2:73, 99, 238, pls. 12, 18, 21, 22.



Fig. 6. Stage 4 distribution (dark shaded area) of the band-handled cooking pot, Iron IIB–C. Light shaded area indicates initial (stage 1) area of distribution (adapted from Hausleiter and Reiche 1999, fig. 1).

company with locally produced Mycenaean pottery.²⁶ A cursory examination of the features of HBW and the fabrics of the BHCP does indeed reveal many common traits: simple rims, the exaggeratedly wide, vertical band handles (a stylistic trait on HBW jars from as early as the Middle Helladic period), and the use of incised, impressed, or appliqué decoration, which might even be considered a diagnostic feature of HBW.²⁷ In fact, from a stylistic point of view, the BHCP could be called something of an amalgam of distinctive HBW elements, all of which are represented on Cyprus, in western Anatolia, and even mainland Greece. In the technology of their manufacture, however, the two classes exhibit striking differences.

HBW is entirely handmade, while the BHCP can be either hand- or wheelmade. Even when handmade, the walls of the BHCPs are considerably thinner than those of similarly sized HBW vessels, suggesting different attention to construction. Unlike the crudely fired HBW, there is minimal difference in coloration between the core and the surface of the BHCP fabric. Where surface coloration on HBW tends to be highly mottled, with bold variation in color visible (i.e., with sharply contrasting red and black patches immediately adjacent), the BHCP surface is uniform or shows only subtly shaded gradients. HBW is not slipped; the BCHPs are always slipped. Finally, HBW is hard burnished. This typically involved the use of a hard implement to scratch (with some force) the body of the vessel, yielding a polished, highly lustrous exterior.²⁸ The BHCP is wet-smoothed, a practice that leaves few or no visible marks. In the rare (early) cases with surface treatment, the vessel is soft burnished with grass or cloth, leaving the exterior lusterless and only faintly marked.²⁹ In all, these traits reveal that despite their morphological overlap, the two differ radically in vessel formation, firing processes, and the degree of craftsmanship (table 3).

The Cypriot Alternative

Pilides has identified a kind of Cypriot monochrome ware in use throughout Late Cycladic (LC) I–II that, she argues, is frequently misclassified as HBW. Al-

²⁹ Pilides 1994, 70.

²⁶Badre 2003, 95.

²⁷Pilides 1994, figs. 5.9, 5.10 (holemouths), 9.21, 9.22, 32.3, 32.6 (band handles), 10.6, 10.15, 27.2–4 (incised decoration);

these are only a few selections from a multitude of examples. $^{\mbox{\tiny 28}}$ Pilides 1994, 69–71.

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though made with gray fabric, the craftsmanship is of higher quality and very different from that of HBW. It has a uniform gray fabric, is fired at higher temperatures, most often slipped, and occasionally is soft burnished with grass or cloth.³⁰

A comparison of fabric and manufacture of the three types shows that the BHCP, rather than following in the technological footsteps of HBW, shares instead the traits of this subset of Cypriot monochrome ware (see table 3). The similarities extend down to the occasional use of soft burnishing, present in the earliest coastal examples, including one from Tarsus, described as having signs of a grass brush used on it.³¹ The BHCPs from Myrtou-Pigadhes seem also to be manufactured in what appears to be this subset of Cypriot monochrome ware.

The BHCP, then, may belong to a class of vessels in which HBW-type vessels are produced in local wares, or at the very least seem to exert stylistic influence on Cypriot forms. Nor is such intermingling without precedent, as HBW appears to have exerted morphological influence on Late Helladic (LH) IIIC Mycenaean forms at several sites in mainland Greece. Reciprocal influence was noted in early–middle LH IIIC at Tiryns, where potters produced both HBW shapes on the wheel using standard Mycenaean cooking pot fabric and likewise Mycenaean shapes by hand in HBW fabric. Decorative features, too, such as incised cordons, were mimicked on Mycenaean vessels (such as Krater FS 282) even in areas where HBW was rare or absent.³²

The fluidity in the BHCP form seen on Cyprus in the LBA and later may reflect the gradual merging of the two traditions—a range of experimental modifications, some adapted and others discarded—as form and function blended.³³ By the time the form arrived in Syria, the shape was essentially fixed, and its basic traits continued more or less unchanged for centuries. The similarity in technology between the BHCP and Cypriot monochrome ware, subsequently imitated for at least the first 200 years of the pot's manufacture in the Levant, may be taken as further evidence for the Cypriot precedence of this vessel.³⁴

New Populations

The viability of the cooking pot as a marker of ethnic or cultural association has been broadly justified by an



Fig. 7. Cooking pot from Tomb 1 at Salamis, 11th century B.C.E. (scale 1:2) (Yon 1969, pl. 19.51).



Fig. 8. Cooking pots from Myrtou-Pigadhes, level VII (scale 1:4) (du Plat Taylor 1957, figs. 16.109, 16.120, 16.126).

ever-increasing body of theoretical and material evidence demonstrating the high degree of conservatism exhibited by utilitarian wares within a given culture group.³⁵ Such conservatism persists—and is in some cases more pronounced—even in environments where marked acculturation can be seen to occur in other facets of the material assemblage of more public character. Utilitarian wares, being largely buffered from status and prestige pressures outside the immediate

³⁰ Pilides 1994, 78.

³¹Hanfmann 1950, 182.

³² Rutter 1990, 37-9.

³³Some morphological variation is to be expected as populations adapt new vessel types to their own culinary practices (Nicklin 1971, 20–1; Yasur-Landau 2005, 182).

³⁴ We emphasize here that the Cypriot vessels are the immediate predecessors to the Syrian versions of the BHCP. The proximity of the HBW tradition in western Anatolia makes this

region a likely candidate as well, although exact parallels for the vessel have yet to be found. The relationship between certain varieties of Anatolian coarse monochrome, such as that identified at Troy, are of particular interest, and it may be that the BHCP marks the presence of an Anatolian component in Cyprus.

³⁵ Rice 1987; Dietler and Herbich 1997; Jones 1997; Stark et al. 1998; Joyner 2007.

Characteristic	Handmade Burnished Ware	Band-Handled Cooking Pot	Cypriot Monochrome Variant
Manufacture	handmade only; thick, crudely constructed vessels; fired at low temperatures, yielding a crumbly, mottled fabric	hand and wheelmade; thin-walled vessels; fired at higher temperatures, yielding a harder fabric	wheelmade; thin-walled vessels; fired at higher temperatures, yielding a harder fabric
Fabric	thick red, black, or gray	thin, gray, gray-brown, or gray-black	thin, gray, gray-black, or grayish red
Temper	large inclusions	smaller inclusions	smaller inclusions
Exterior treatment	unslipped; hard burnished (visible horizontal burnishing marks on large pots)	slipped; wet-smoothed, soft burnished (rarely)	slipped; unburnished, occasionally soft burnished
Interior coloration	sharp distinction between core and surface coloration after firing	minimal distinction between core and surface color after firing	minimal distinction between core and surface color after firing
Exterior coloration	highly mottled (i.e., sharply contrasting patches of red and black)	mostly uniform coloration	mostly uniform coloration

Table 3. Characteristics of Handmade Burnished Wares, Band-Handled Cooking Pots, and the Cypriot Monochrome Variant.

family, and likewise divorced from commercial concerns, reveal more of the "culture of the private," that manifestation of identity generally shaped by the internal domain or habitus.36 Cooking pots in particular carry a unique symbolic load, as their role is not limited to mere "techno-function."37 Anthropological studies have shown that preference for traditional cooking pot forms persists even when technologically superior vessels are available. Furthermore, such studies show that subjects insist that food prepared in traditional vessels simply "tastes better" than food prepared identically in equivalent but nontraditional vessels.38 Cuisine and the manner of its preparation both, therefore, have a clear connection to group identity as internally defined. As such, cooking pots can be a compelling diagnostic tool in the classification of culture units.³⁹ Rather than being a throwback to the traditional pots = people assumptions of the processual school, such an approach reflects an effort to temper sociological and material concerns into a refined and thoughtful methodology.

pearance and spread of the BHCP marks the arrival of a foreign population, likely from Cypriot shores, in Syria and Cilicia during the late 12th and early 11th centuries. At the very least, it marks the passage of a population that took up residence in Cyprus before making extensive inroads into Syria during the Early Iron Age. BAND-HANDLED COOKING POTS AND LOCALLY

It therefore seems reasonable to argue that the ap-

PRODUCED MYCENAEAN WARES

The possibility of a Cypriot incursion into Syria during the 12th century calls to mind the arrival of the Sea Peoples, the mixed group of Aegean and Anatolian raiders to whom is attributed much of the widespread disruption at Levantine coastal sites at the end of the LBA. Egyptian texts tell us that the Sea Peoples destroyed the city of Sumur (identified by Badre and others as Tell Kazel)40 and set up a camp in Amurru along the Syrian coast before settling in southern Palestine and engaging Egyptian armies at the mouth of

³⁶Bourdieu 1993; Burmeister 2000, 542.

³⁷Rice 1987, 460.

³⁸Arnold 1985, 138–39; Rice 1987, 463.

³⁹ Skibo 1992, 34; Jones 1997; Meadows 1997, 21; Allison 1999, 14; Joyner 2007, 205.

⁴⁰Capet and Gubel 2000, 425; Badre 2006, 67.

the Nile. In its earliest incarnation, the BHCP seems to appear in association with locally produced Mycenaean-style pottery.⁴¹ This is therefore a relationship that warrants further exploration.

In examining the distribution above, it becomes clear that there is indeed a significant overlap between the BHCP and locally produced Mycenaean pottery. In fact, whether in handfuls or in spades, Mycenaean style appears at all but two of the 14 sites where the BHCP appears in Syria during the first three stages of expansion (fig. 9).⁴² Both appear in especially significant quantities in the Amuq sites of Chatal Höyük, Tell Judaidah, and Tell Tayinat. Furthermore, even outside Syria, Mycenaean-style pottery appears in all the coastal locations where the cooking pot is found. It is thus extremely tempting to pair the arrival of this new Cypriot cooking pot with the appearance of local Mycenaean pottery. However, the chronology—as it is currently understood—suggests otherwise.

At Ras Ibn Hani, the cooking pot does seem to appear together with locally produced Mycenaean-style pottery in the "squatter phase" following the destruction of the North Palace in Early Iron I.43 Tell Sukas and Tell Daruk, which have very small quantities of locally produced Mycenaean-style pottery,44 yielded many BHCPs, all of which were found in mixed contexts, leaving the relationship opaque. Tell Tweini has some painted pottery in its Early Iron Age settlement, but this is as yet unpublished; these painted wares may not be Mycenaean in derivation.⁴⁵ As a result, these three coastal sites do little to shed light on the sequence of events. Outside of Syria at Tarsus, locally produced Mycenaean pottery appears in the post-Hittite Late Bronze (LB) IIb levels, while the BHCP is first recorded in the Early Iron Age.46

Farther inland, in the Amuq (stage 2 expansion), both the cooking pot and Mycenaean-style pottery appear in significant quantities during phase N (1150–950 B.C.E.). A study of the Chicago collections, however, indicates that the cooking pot shows up in slightly later levels of phase N, while the Mycenaean-style pottery is present from the very earliest levels. This may be purely coincidental in those collections, given their unreliable state; however, the gap between the arrival of Mycenaean-style pottery and the BHCP is borne out

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in the sites of the stage 3 expansion, where it is even more pronounced.

At Tell Afis, Mycenaean-style pottery appears in level 9a and continues through level 6, spanning 1150/1125-1000 B.C.E., after which point production dropped off, although the Mycenaean-influenced painted tradition continues well into Iron II.47 The BHCP first appears at Tell Afis late in levels 7-6 (1050-1000 B.C.E.) but is most substantially represented in later levels 5-3 (1000-550 B.C.E.) (fig. 10). A similar situation prevails at Tell Qarqur, where Mycenaean-style pottery is dated by Dornemann to the 11th century, but the BHCP is generally assigned to Iron IIA (11th-10th centuries in this context) (fig. 11).⁴⁸ At 'Ain Dara, the absolute date for the appearance of Mycenaean-style painted pottery is not specified. We can only deduce from the excavators' comment that the painted wares are absent from the LBA-Iron transition and that they likewise decreased sharply in Iron II; this leaves the window for the appearance of Mycenaean-style pottery ca. 1150-1100 (level XIX in the northeast quadrant), while BHCPs first appear ca. 1000.49 Tell Mastuma has only been published piecemeal, but from the available material, it is clear that painted pottery with Mycenaean or Aegean affiliation begins to appear in the late 11th or early 10th century (level I-3), while the BHCPs appear in levels I-2 and I-1, later in Iron II.⁵⁰

Thus, with the exception of Ras Ibn Hani, the consistent pattern is that locally produced Mycenaean-style pottery precedes the arrival of the Cypriot cooking pot wherever both wares are clearly established. The length of that gap is uncertain, however. It will be some time before understanding of local Mycenaean pottery is sufficiently nuanced to be able to pinpoint the exact size of the chronological separation between the two. The earliest Iron I chronology of Syria is still pegged almost entirely on stylistic dating of Mycenaean "imports" and "imitations"-even at sites employing modern excavation methods and with reliable stratigraphy, of which there are few.⁵¹ Obviously, such practices are a best effort to grapple with the absence of absolute chronological anchors, but given the widespread diffusion of local Mycenaean-style products during Iron I (many of which are very similar to Cypriot types and of higher quality than one might expect from local

⁴¹ Badre 2006, 95.

⁴² The exceptions are Tell Tweini and Tell Abou Danné. Gjerstad 1934; Seton-Williams 1954; Yener et al. 2000; Salmeri et al. 2002.

⁴³Bounni et al. 1979, 251–55. The full assemblage and levels are not published.

⁴⁴Bonatz 1993, 135.

⁴⁵Vansteenhuyse 2005.

⁴⁶Yakar 1993, 16–17; contra Jean (2003, 82), who proposes

that the post-Hittite levels should be downdated to the Early or even Middle Iron Age.

⁴⁷Cecchini and Mazzoni 1998, 129.

⁴⁸Dornemann 2000, 473–81, fig. 17.

⁴⁹Stone and Zimansky 1999, 30, 140.

⁵⁰Wakita et al. 2000, 552.

⁵¹ I.e., Mazzoni 2000, 33; Venturi 2000, 536. The carbon dating being conducted at Tayinat could provide welcome insight.



Fig. 9. Map showing distribution of Mycenaean-style pottery from excavated sites in Iron Age Syria and Cilicia. Distribution reflects excavated sites only. Survey data has documented local Mycenaean-style pottery at 18 additional sites in the Amuq Valley and 21 sites in the Cilician plain (adapted from Hausleiter and Reiche 1999, fig. 1).

manufacture), the risks of miscategorization and circularity are high.⁵² Fortunately, the stratigraphic relationships make clear that local Mycenaean pottery and the BHCP follow chronologically distinct progressions.

Travelers or Traders

Though we cannot pair the BHCP and the local Mycenaean-style pottery as evidence for the arrival of Sea Peoples, we can note that both have their likely origins in Cyprus—or at least Cyprus as a way station—and both do seem to have moved along similar paths into Syria. These shared features make it unlikely that they are unrelated phenomena and their distributive overlap purely coincidental. Yet if both are elements of an infiltrating "Aegean" culture,⁵³ how is this staggered start to be understood?

The simplest option is to treat the two wares as reflections of two separate population movements, the first wave marked by Mycenaean-style pottery,⁵⁴ associated with the destruction at Ras Shamra and the Sea Peoples' supposed settlement at Ras Ibn Hani, the second a later peaceful immigration of the BHCP-bearers, a population hailing most immediately from Cyprus. The first wave of immigrants expanded rapidly inland along the Orontes River in earlier Iron I, while the later arrivals and their descendants—although following in

⁵² There is a particularly problematic tendency to push dating of these wares earlier on purely stylistic grounds (i.e., based on similarity to known LH IIIC mainland examples), when in fact the stylistic development of Iron Age imitations of Mycenaean pottery in the northern Levant is not yet well understood. It is clear from examining the later Iron II assemblages of this ware from Syria that early and middle LH IIIC traits may well have echoed for centuries beyond what was previously thought. This may artificially skew the size of the chrono-

logical gap between this pottery and BHCPs at some sites.

⁵³The term "Aegean" here is used in its broadest definition to include Cyprus, the eastern Mediterranean, "Mycenaeanized" western Anatolia, and Mycenae itself—inclusive of all the participants in the LBA cultural koine marked in part by a preference for Mycenaean-style pottery.

⁵⁴Although the treatment of the Iron Age Mycenaean-style pottery as an isolated marker of migration has come under considerable fire in recent years (see esp. Sherratt 1998).

the footsteps of their perhaps more aggressive predecessors—gradually migrated even farther to the south and east to the western Euphrates.

Recent publications have begun to document the appearance of non-Levantine and potentially Aegean features appearing at northern Levantine sites that boast Mycenaean-style wares and that might support an assessment of this kind. These include fibulas, clay cylinder loomweights, and even sporadic examples of Mycenaean cooking pots, all recovered from Iron Age Cilician and Syrian contexts.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, many (though not all) of these items are noted in phases where the Mycenaean-style wares and the BHCPs overlap, and therefore foreign features appearing in this horizon might arguably be associated with either the earlier or later wave. Moreover, while many of these intrusive elements can be identified as broadly Aegean, in most cases we lack the ability to narrow down any more specific point of origin.⁵⁶ This indeed may be the methodological challenge facing the next generation of Sea Peoples scholars. For if, as is broadly accepted, the Sea Peoples are a heterogeneous group of various Mediterranean origins, how does one distinguish materially between a wave of Sea Peoples and a movement of Mycenaeanized Cypriots, or between the different tribes of Sea Peoples? It is only through particular attention to humbler coarse and domestic wares, which can more reliably-and often more specifically-be tied to a culture group, that we may eventually be able to unravel the many threads of this larger migratory tapestry.

A second option makes room for the marketplace in the equation.⁵⁷ It may be possible to distinguish between a very brief stage of Early Iron Age Mycenaean imports later followed by broad local production. Bonatz proposes that the Mycenaean-style pottery at Ras Ibn Hani (where it appears together with the BHCP) was initially of Cypriot manufacture and was locally produced only later in Iron I (although to my knowledge this has never been confirmed by petrographic means nor are the two stages clearly distinguishable at the site).⁵⁸ This is the judgment rendered also by the excavators of Tell Afis and 'Ain Dara regarding the first appearance of such wares.⁵⁹ It is conceivable that the earliest Mycenaean-



Fig. 10. Band-handled cooking pot from Tell Afis, levels 5–3 (Venturi 2000, fig. 13.20–2).



Fig. 11. Band-handled cooking pot from Tell Qarqur, Iron II levels (Dornemann 2000, fig. 17).

style wares to appear could have been products of Cyprus or manufactured by a newly arrived Aegean population on the Syrian coast for inland markets. The eastward shift of the BHCP might thus represent the eventual arrival in the Syrian interior of the agents of this local production. For while locally produced Mycenaean-style pottery penetrates into the Syrian heartland within roughly 50 years after its first appearance on the coast, the BHCP progresses rather slowly over the course of a century or more.

⁵⁵ Mycenaean cooking pots: documented at Tarsus (Yasur-Landau 2005), noted during my own research on the collections from Chatal Höyük, and confirmed also at Tell Tayinat (Janeway 2006). Fibulas: Ras Ibn Hani, Tell Afis, 'Ain Dara, Tell Mastuma, Tell Knedig. Loomweights: Tell Afis, Tabara el-Akrad, Chatal Höyük, Tell Tayinat. For a thorough discussion of the Mycenaean-style pottery and other Aegean elements appearing in Syria during Iron I–II, see Birney 2007, 343–46, 380–81, 386–90.

⁵⁶ The confusion regarding the origins of unbaked clay "spool" weights, which have precedent in the Aegean, Anatolia, and Europe, demonstrates the difficulties inherent in such ethnic attributions (e.g., Rahmstorf 2005).

⁵⁷ Sherratt 1998; see also Bauer 1988; Caubet 1992; Bikai 1994.

⁵⁸Bonatz 1993, 139–40.

⁵⁹ Tell Afis, levels 9c-b; 'Ain Dara, trench 1, levels 2-3.

There are some difficulties in this mercantile model that have yet to be adequately resolved—not least of which is the sudden development in Syria of an ardent taste for Mycenaean pottery in areas that had never before been exposed to it. Chemical analyses, of which exceedingly few have been conducted,⁶⁰ will be essential in determining the mechanisms—whether migratory, mercantile, or some combination of the two—responsible for the diffusion of Mycenaean-style pottery in the northern Levant.

CONCLUSION

The cooking pot *à la stéatite*, far from being an isolated phenomenon of the northern coast, spans an ocean and several centuries to become a significant presence in the material culture of Iron Age Syria. Its morphological and technological connections to Cypriot cooking vessels in the preceding LBA mark it as a likely herald for the arrival of immigrants of immediate Cypriot origin in the northern Levant. These newcomers appear to have settled initially on the coast and later moved well into the Syrian heartland, their influence echoing for centuries.

The Byzantine historian Malalas records a local legend of the Antioch plain in his *Chronographia*. He tells how long ago in the region of Antioch, a certain king Kasus (or Kasios, the eponymous ancestor after whom Mt. Kasios is named) married a woman named Amyke, who was otherwise known as Kitia. Amyke was the daughter of the Cypriot king Salamis and came to Syria in company with other Cypriot and Cretan settlers. Upon her death and burial, she lent her name to the region that is now called the "Amuq."⁶¹

This intriguing passage, though far removed in time, reveals the vestiges of a historical memory of a Cypriot presence in this area of northern Syria, a connection ancient enough to be tied to the divine mountain that is the major landmark in the region. Woolley noticed the Malalas text and felt that it confirmed the antiquity of the Greek city Posideium, with which he identified Al Mina,⁶² (an identification later refuted successfully by Courbin in favor of Ras el-Bassit).⁶³ To Woolley, however, the "heroic age" in which the city was to have been founded was in the eighth century, the height of the Orientalizing period, defined by Near Eastern and Greek cultural exchange. This period was his admitted focus and interest, after all, and he was further limited in his perspective by the absence (at that time) of Early

⁶⁰The excellent study conducted on the material from Tell Kazel is a welcome start (Badre et al. 2005).

Iron Age settlement either at Al Mina or nearby Bassit. The archaeological record as we know it now shows undisputed evidence for earlier settlement at these and other nearby sites on the coast and well inland. It may be, then, that the ancient relationship between Cyprus and northern Syria represented in the marriage between Kasios and Amyke reflects not the interactions of the Orientalizing period but instead a time several centuries earlier, when Cypriot immigrants first populated the region.

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⁶³Courbin 1990.

⁶¹Malalas *Chronographia* 8.256–57: "Casus enim rex uxorem habuit Amycen, que et Cittia vocata est, Saialamini, Cypriorum regis, filiam: cum hac Cyprii venientes, urbis summitates in-

coluerunt. Amyce deinde mortua, centum ab urbe stadiis sepulta est, a qua regio ea Amyce dicta sit."

⁶² Woolley 1938, 28–30.

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