

## *Funerary Practices, Female Identities, and the Clay Pyxis in Late Minoan III Crete*

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In the funerary archaeology of LM III Crete studies aimed at highlighting the specific links existing between gender, age, social status, and material culture are almost nonexistent. This is unsurprising considering that, alongside a general lack of osteological analyses, the funerary evidence of LM III Crete suffers from a number of limitations that makes it difficult to interpret. First, within multiple tombs—the vast majority—it is not always possible to attribute materials to individual burials. Furthermore, the materials from funerary contexts have usually been studied more from a stylistic or typological perspective than as cultural markers. Taxonomy and typology, together with iconography, are powerful archaeological tools that cannot be underestimated, but in funerary studies an interpretative approach can only be developed by focusing on the assemblage of materials and reconstructing any patterns that can be identified relating to ritual practices, symbolic meanings, and preferences in the use of material culture (on Crete, cf. Preston 1999, 2004, 2007; Soles 2008; D'Agata 2015; D'Agata and De Angelis 2016). In addition, there are a number of caveats with respect to the reconstruction of social identities from funerary remains. The meaning and symbolism of burial customs is complex and does not always refer directly to the social status of the dead in life (Parker Pearson 1999; Chapman 2003). The use of material culture may be polyvalent, while social actors may belong to multiple identity groups at any given moment in their life, and may have context-dependent identities. More specifically, objects are not inherently gendered nor do they simply reflect gender norms, and they also seem to have had multiple meanings (Hoskins 1998, 2006; Talalay 2008). The significance of objects may change over time, depending on the occasions on which they were used and the people who made use of them, making contextual interpretations necessary to understand the role played by material culture in the funerary sphere. It is true that funerary practices are chosen by the burying group and may crystallize the deceased's identity for group or individual purposes (Wright 2010, 103). On the other hand, it is important to identify the

gender-and-age-related practices with which the deceased was associated at the funeral performance. The process of identity construction and performance in the funerary context is a central theme of the archaeology of death (Gilchrist 1999; Diaz-Andreu 2000; Diaz-Andreu *et al.* 2005).

Concomitant with the reoccupation of the Palace at Knossos, in the 14th century BC burials became a significant feature in Cretan society once again.<sup>1</sup> Among the factors that may explain the appearance of the new funerary custom are the redefinition of the concept of the individual human being and the human body, and, later on, the establishment of the family as the basic social core unit. The role of family and individual in the funerary record is clearly perceivable on the mainland as well as on Crete in the 14th and 13th centuries BC. The importance acquired at that time by the family and the broader social community has however tended to overshadow individual identity in LM III funerary ritual. Nevertheless, the major transformations occurring then in the social structure of the island, attested above all by the introduction of single burials, allow the potential distinction of individualities, whose identification remains one of the tasks of archaeological analysis. Gillespie (2001, 101) made this point exceedingly clear: “The construction of persons, a constant process throughout (even beyond) people’s lives, puts into practice the organizing principles or generative schemata of society. It is one means by which structure becomes internalized, even as its source lies outside of individual human beings. “Individual and collective are not mutually exclusive but are rather two sides of the same structural complex” (Fortes 1973, 314), and it is their recursive relationship, dynamically enacted in practice, that produces society.”

During the Late Bronze Age, a highly gendered society developed in the Aegean (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985, 1988; Rehak 1998; Voutsaki 1999, 2012; Talalay 2008; Weilhartner 2012; Chapin 2012; Olsen 2014; also Driessen 2012). As wall-paintings and Linear B studies have shown, there was a clear dichotomy between adult male and female. On frescoes, visual distinction of gender was primarily entrusted to skin color. The style of costumes, worn by red-skinned male and white-skinned female figures respectively, generally confirm this distinction: the former wear kilts or codpieces, the latter flounced skirts and tight bodices. This distinction, however, holds true particularly for the Neopalatial imagery. In the 14th and 13th centuries BC gender was indicated primarily by the color convention. “Men and women of the Final Palatial era wore similar clothing when participating in similar activities. [ . . . ] Costume was associated with human activity, not with gender” (Chapin 2012, 303).

1. On Cretan burial customs of the Bronze Age (3000–1200 BC): D’Agata 2015; D’Agata and De Angelis 2016; Devolder 2010; Girella 2015; Legarra Herrero 2014; Murphy 2011; Preston 1999, 2004, 2007; Rehak and Younger 2001; Soles 2008; Soles *et al.* 2011; Vavouranakis 2007. On the dearth of formal burials in Neopalatial times: Rehak and Younger 2001, 110; Preston 2004, 105–110.

In contrast to Linear A, where one logogram was used to signify a person, in the Linear B script male and female are expressed by two logograms that differ for the presence/absence of clothing: a long dress/skirt for females, no clothing for males. In the palace economic system this binary distinction finds correspondence in the sexually exclusive workgroups, in which women and men were confined. “Men clearly dominate the social and economic structures by means of less restricted access to property holding and land tenure” (Weilharter 2012, 288). Women, however, played different roles, both religious and secular (Shelmerdine 2016). According to Olsen, gender organization was not uniform in Mycenaean Greece, but seems to have been regulated on the basis of a strong cultural regionalism. At Pylos, gender practices resemble the later Greek ones, with a strong male predominance in land property, production activities, and religious roles. At Knossos, women play a wider role that is considered to reflect the persistence of a strong, local (Minoan) social heritage (Olsen 2014; contra Shelmerdine 2016). Be that as it may, the analysis of the funerary system within the framework of the Mycenaean states confirms that different treatments were reserved for males, females, and children. However, this subdivision cannot be applied rigidly, since there were differences of representation within each group linked particularly to age, social status, and regional preferences that, especially in the case of children, rendered the boundaries between them rather fluid.

In mainland Greece, gender differentiation begins from Circle B at Mycenae, and culminates in Circle A, where the male and female ambits are separated and given different values, and where age relations are characterized by marked exclusion and asymmetry (Voutsaki 1998, 1999, 2004, 2012). In the shaft graves, however, the females have high wealth scores, and in Circle B two of these wealthy females are girls, one of whom is five. Children of 5–6 years are associated with a marked expression of gendered identity in death, and at this age female children are recognized through the exhibition of specific types of jewelry (earrings, rings, pins) (Haas-Lebegyev 2012, 427). Different expressions of status, sex, and age, and a segregation of male and female roles can be considered a feature of LH III Greece (Mee 1998). Weaponry became a general marker of male status, while female burial practices appear to be characterized by variability and the absence of a common codex that is recognizable within the Mycenaean social structure (Leith 2013).

One object that can be classified as a female gender marker has already been identified in the LM III funerary evidence. In the Ta tablets from Pylos, footstools made of ebony with an ivory revetment (*ta-ra-nu*) are listed as feasting goods (Palaima 2004; cf. Schepartz *et al.* 2014). These objects are associated with women in the Mycenaean iconography of power (Rehak 1995; Peterson Murray 2016), and one example has been reconstructed as a piece of furniture placed in the burial of a high social status woman in Tholos A at Archanes (Sakellarakis and Sakellaraki 1983, 82–84, fig. 52, 1997, 660–662, 721–729; Poursat 1977a, 32).

A second object, that has hitherto not received attention, requires discussion here. The LH IIIB2 fresco with life-size woman holding a pyxis from the palace of Tiryns is thought to have been part of a large frieze originally located in the vestibule of the Great Megaron (Maran 2012; Maran *et al.* 2015). The procession of women has been reconstructed as walking on opposite sides of the anteroom toward the throne in the principal room of the complex. Besides ivory pyxides the offerings include another ivory vessel, a bronze vessel, and a wheel-thrown terracotta figure. An ivory comb identified on a new fragment has been recently added to the collection (Maran *et al.* 2015, 102, fig. 2). It has been noted that the presence of such an item may be indicative of the gender of the recipient. In this respect, however, the objects depicted on the wall paintings as a whole do not provide a coherent indication. In funerary contexts combs are mainly, but not exclusively, found in association with males of different ages. By contrast, pyxides, both in valuable/exotic materials or in clay, are objects that, when found in single tombs for which osteological analyses are available, appear to have been limited to female consumption. In the advanced Late Bronze Age funerary system on Crete it seems to have been chosen to mark a female gender role. This will be discussed further in what follows. For the moment we will summarize the main tendencies in the associations visible in the Cretan tombs of the LM IIIA2–IIIB that are significant in terms of gender.

Starting from those instances for which osteological analyses are available, the study of the Cretan funerary evidence of the LM II–LM IIIB allows us to identify some objects that present recurring and significant associations in terms of the representation of identity.<sup>2</sup> It has been possible to ascertain that some objects found in LM IIIA2–IIIB tombs can be associated with specific age groups with reasonable certainty, and to identify correlations used to express individual identities and gender differences in the burial population of Crete in the 14th and 13th centuries BC.

In LM II–IIIB, male identity in funerary contexts appears to be closely linked to the possession of weapons and sharp tools. Of a total of about 1,000 tombs (cf. Löwe 1996) there are 121 tombs assigned with certainty to LM II–IIIB for which we have an attribution of grave goods to individual burials and in which weapons or a sharp instrument such as a knife or razor are present. Osteological analyses are available for 20 tombs. In percentage terms this means that only 17% have been analyzed, but it is important to note that in these cases only burials of adult males are associated with weapons such as swords, spears, and daggers. For women, children, or infants the association with weapons of this type is not documented. In other words, at present, the burial of armed individuals must be ascribed exclusively to adult males, variously associated with swords, daggers, spears, and in a few cases arrows.

2. On this ongoing project, cf. D'Agata 2015, 97; D'Agata and De Angelis 2016 n. 1.

The analysis of the associations of material culture indicates two distinct chronological phases. The earlier dates to LM II–IIIA2 early and comprises 66 tombs, 40 of which can be ascribed to an individual armed with a long sword, usually associated with another weapon like a spear or dagger, or with a bronze tool (knife/razor). Based on the few osteological analyses, these armed individuals are aged between 18 and 35. The presence of arrows is limited to a few instances dating to the LM II and IIIA (probably IIIA1). The sword may be associated with bronze vessels and/or a bowl or cup in the same material. The remaining 26 tombs comprise male burials with a knife and/or razor. The age range of the male individuals in this second group seems to be broader, from 18 to 45.

The second phase comprises 55 tombs dating from LM IIIA2 advanced to LM IIIB, of which 36 have weapons and 19 have sharp instruments (knife and/or razor). An important development is the decline of swords, which seem even to disappear in central Crete. The five known specimens come from sites in western Crete (Armenoi, Chania) or the east of the island (Pharmakokephalo, Sitia). As with swords, there is a marked decline in bronze vessels; with few exceptions, these are documented exclusively in central Crete, suggesting that they were inherited or acquired objects rather than the products of active workshops. Simultaneously, we see an increase in clay vessels among the grave goods. Small jugs and stirrup jars become common, while in the necropolis of Armenoi the closed vessel known as the alabastron is frequent (Nezeri 2013). Few tombs have yielded kraters, and these are prevalently associated with male burials.

In short, between LM II and IIIA2 early, male burials were mainly associated with weaponry and bronze tools. Starting from LM IIIA2 advanced, some types of weapons become rare in funerary contexts and the tombs that have yielded weapons include a dagger and/or a second weapon, and may contain bronze tools. An exception for this period is the tomb at Chania, Odos Igoumenou Gavril (Karantzali 1986, 71, fig.16), where the long bronze sword represents an anachronism for its time. Finally, where osteological analyses are available, no weapon (sword, dagger, spear) is associated with a woman. The association with swords or daggers is not documented with certainty for infants or children either. However, among the sharp instruments, the knife-axe is in a few cases associated with female burials (D'Agata forthcoming). Also connected with male tombs are bronze vessels, in accordance with an association already known starting from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae. The masculine ability to sponsor feasting and the “added value” attached to ritual drinking are also expressed by the metal or clay kylix, which until the LM IIIB continues to be almost exclusively associated with male burials.

In the course of LM III, funerary practices moved toward standardization and male burials were associated with different kinds of weapons and with bronze and clay objects (kylikes, kraters, and conical rhyta). Women, however, became

visible, and jewelry—made up of an array of motifs and symbols giving materialization to the Mycenaean ideological system (Eder 2015)—seems to have been reserved for them. A detailed study of the assemblages will allow us to discern the representations of plural identities in funerary contexts (D'Agata forthcoming).

The appearance in Cretan tombs, from LM III onward, of women with special status is illustrated by the funerary deposition in the side chamber of Tholos Tomb A at Archanes of the early 14th century BC (Sakellarakis 1970; Sakellarakis and Sakellaraki 1997, 158–168).<sup>3</sup> The burial presents some exceptional features that are still unparalleled on the island. The built tomb, of very large dimensions, consists of a main chamber (h. 5.04; diam. 4.31 m) and a small side chamber of trapezoidal shape (2.1 × 1.95; hypothetical height 2.05 m), where the main burial was deposited.<sup>4</sup> Remains of animal sacrifices, which are also very rare on Crete (D'Agata 2015, 216, n.16), have been found in the main chamber (a horse), and in the side chamber (a bull's head). The clay larnax in the side chamber is one of the largest ever found in Crete. The deceased buried inside wore a long dress adorned with golden beads in form of rosettes and papyrus. A bronze mirror with an ivory handle may originally have been placed on the rim of the clay larnax. The quantity of jewelry found on the body is exceptional, with gold and faience beads prevalent among it. These may originally have been inside the wooden container placed under the chest, of which only fragments of the ivory revetment survive. Apart from the performative use of this object in the funeral, it probably had a specific connection to the deceased, and its role, as we shall see, is comparable to that fulfilled by a clay pyxis in funerary contexts.

Beside the one recently found at Pylos (Davis and Stocker 2016), the burial in the side chamber of Tholos A at Archanes is the only one to be associated with five gold signet rings. Ten bronze vessels, some of which were carefully stacked one on top of the other, allude to the ability to hold banquets, a prerogative that in funerary contexts is largely reserved for males. As stated earlier, the footstool found in front of the sarcophagus can be connected with objects known from the Mycenaean iconography of power associated with female identity.

No weapons were found in Tholos A at Archanes, even if a bronze tool with an ivory handle was collected under the sarcophagus. Nevertheless, we should stress the representation of elements linked to military ideology on some of the objects found in the tomb. Figure-of-eight shields are depicted on as many as four out of the five gold rings found in the tomb, and on a lentoid seal stone in jasper (Sakellarakis and Sakellaraki 1997, 698).<sup>5</sup> On the wooden footstool,

3. Given the poor condition in which the bone remains were found and the absence of osteological analyses, I concur with the opinion of the excavators, who consider this to be a female burial, Sakellarakis and Sakellaraki 1997, 168.

4. Side chambers that seem to have been reserved for the main burial are known only on the Mainland in the 13th century BC, at Mycenae (Tomb of Atreus) and Orchomenos (Treasury of Minyas).

5. See also Rehak 2009, 12–13.

a composition of ivory plaques in relief has been reconstructed that included figure-of-eight shields and a pair of warriors' heads with helmets of the boar's tusk type (Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1997, 660–662, 721–729; Papadopoulos 2008–2009). Thus, regardless of the presence of actual weapons, the deceased buried in Tholos A at Archanes was also given a warlike identity.<sup>6</sup> It seems legitimate to state that in 14th century BC Crete, objects and iconography associated with the burial of high social status women fell within a mortuary ideology that did not differ significantly from that reserved for male individuals of equal status. To put it in a different way, in LM III Crete at the highest level of the social hierarchy, gender identity was less significant than the social status of the individual. The performance of identity in death had many features in common for Cretan men and women belonging to the highest level of society.

A different instance is provided by Tholos D at Archanes, smaller than Tholos A and cut into the rock, which contained the burial of a young lady (Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1997, 185–186). Placed on a wooden bier, the woman held a bronze mirror in her left hand, level with her face, and wore a rich set of jewelry: on her head a golden diadem, around the neck three necklaces, mostly with beads in gold and faience. A fabric interwoven with gold thread covered her head and shoulders, and was probably held in place by faience pins. The large number of gold rosettes found nearby were interpreted by the excavators as part of the decoration of the long robe that the woman must have worn. Near the head was a large, elaborately decorated clay pyxis, inside which was a bronze knife-ax, perhaps with an ivory handle, a necklace with differently-shaped beads of gold and faience, and a rock crystal pendent in the shape of a figure-of-eight shield.

This burial shares some features with that described previously, including the remarkable quantity of jewelry of extraordinarily high quality, the mirror and a container made of different material. Already from the period of the Shaft Graves, female burials were often linked to objects of adornment (Voutsaki 2005, 359). Jewelry has multiple meanings: it exalts the beauty of the deceased, as a counterpart to the ideal of male beauty established from the formative period of the Mycenaean civilization, and may at the same time allude to the woman's capacity for attraction (Paschalidis 2012). Equally, it may express the wealth of the "family" and its capacity to access a variety of resources. The presence of objects and symbols alluding to the ideology of warfare is also linked to high social status, which in the burial of Tholos D is represented by the pendant in the shape of a figure-of-eight shield.<sup>7</sup> The only clay vessel found in Tholos D is the large pyxis with a lid placed near the head of the deceased (Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1997, 462, fig. 444).

6. On armed females in Mycenaean iconography, Harrell 2014, 99.

7. According to Pliatsika (2012, 616), a clay wheel-made figure from Midea, the "Lady of Midea," wears a pendent in form of a figure-of-eight shield.



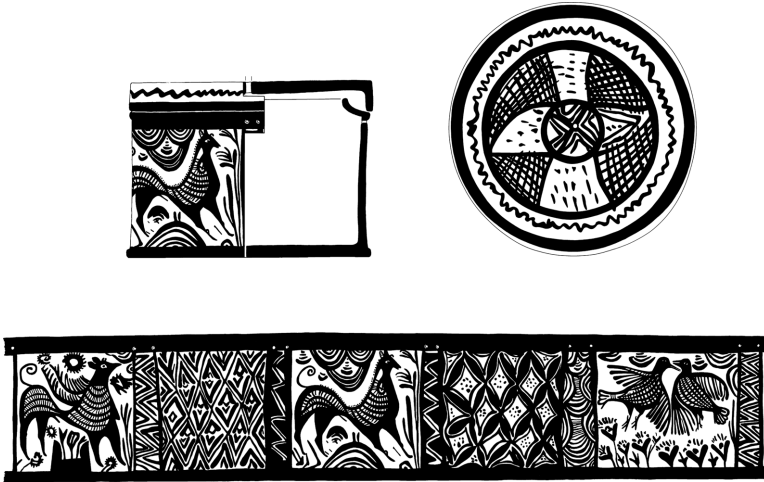


FIG. 14.1 Clay pyxis and lid from Mochlos (IIB.791–792), 1:3 (after Smith 2010, fig. 68).

Ivory pyxides are present in Tombs I and III of Circle A at Mycenae (Poursat 1977a, 25; Voutsaki 2004, 359), perhaps in association with female burials,<sup>8</sup> and continue to appear, during LH III, in female burials of high social status such as the tomb on the Areopagus in Athens and that at Megalo Kastello, Thebes (Athenian Agora: Immerwahr 1971, 158–169; Poursat 1977a, 25; Thebes: Spyropoulos 1973, 252–258; Poursat 1977a, 25). As we have seen, there was an ivory-covered container also in Tholos A at Archanes. Remains of a bone revetment, perhaps belonging to a wooden box, were found on the right shoulder of the pregnant woman in the half-destroyed chamber tomb at Pangalochori. She was buried inside a clay larnax with numerous jewels and a bronze mirror with an ivory handle (Baxevani-Kouzioni and Markoulaki 1996, 646). In chamber tomb X at Upper Gypsadhes (lower level), the remains of a wooden object, probably a box, were found along with a knife-axe between two skeletons. One of the two, skeleton II, lay in a contracted position, together with a bronze mirror and some jewelry (Hood *et al.* 1958–1959, 210–212, 250–251, figs. 11, 29, 35; pls. 56g, 58d, 59a). The composition of the latter (beads of different shapes in glass or faience and gold, and one rock crystal pendant), the presence of a mirror and a knife-axe, and of a container,<sup>9</sup> make the artifact assemblage probably associated with this burial comparable to the one from Archanes Tholos D.

8. According to Voutsaki (2004, 359) valuable containers are associated with male and female burials. However, a recent restudy of the osteological evidence of Circle A (Papazoglou-Manioudaki *et al.* 2010, 159, 175–176) has shown that female burials are present in Tomb III, as well as in Tomb I, where ivory pyxides have been found (Poursat 1977a, 25; 1977b, 59 no. 206; Velsink 2003, 14, 26).

9. Tomb IV at Upper Gypsadhes also yielded the remains of what seems to have been a wooden box, apparently associated with at least one female burial, cf. Hood, Huxley, Sandars 1958–1959, 204.



Clay pyxides equipped with a lid are a Cretan, probably Knossian, invention of the LM IB period that became common in LM II.<sup>10</sup> The form imitates objects in valuable material that, though rare, circulated on the island at the time.<sup>11</sup> Their derivation from containers usually decorated with figurative scenes is also rendered obvious from the presence, on some of these Cretan clay vessels, of genre scenes (e.g., Crouwel and Morris 1995, 171), or scenes with a narrative intent (e.g., Soles 2008, 143, IIB.795–796; Smith 2010, 103, fig. 70). The adoption on Crete, starting from LM IIIA2, of clay pyxides in funerary contexts is a new phenomenon in the Aegean.<sup>12</sup> A ceramic vessel does not necessarily have the same exchange value as a beautifully carved box made of an imported raw material. The unusually large size, however, as in the case of the pyxis from Archanes Tholos D, or its fine craftsmanship, or even the pictorial decoration (e.g., Figs. 14.1–3) may transform it into a higher-order prestige good (e.g., Keswani 2004, 142). Nonetheless, the pyxis cannot be described as a vessel specifically intended for funerary use. In Crete it is also found in domestic contexts (Hallager 2003, 225, 238, 2011, 317–318, 343), where it may have had a variety of uses (for storing jewelry, cosmetics, herbs, small objects, and even wool). Indeed, the small holes under the rim, usually matching those on the lid, were useful for fastening as well as for suspension (Fig. 14.2). Within domestic contexts the vessel may have also identified areas of activity considered specifically feminine, as recently claimed for the two LM IIIA2 pyxides found in House X at Kommos (Shaw 2011).<sup>13</sup> In funerary contexts, pyxides were intended to contain jewelry or objects of some value, like needles, or bronze tools. But their social value must have rapidly broadened, transforming them into individualizing objects closely associated with their owner, to the extent that they were used, already in LM IIIA2, as funerary urns. Pyxides thus became part of the system of material symbols through which the identity characteristics of the deceased, such as their gender, age and sex, were immediately perceptible to participants in the funerary ritual. Indeed, the analysis of burial contexts containing pyxides tells us that, within the funerary system that takes shape in LM III, this vessel acted as a marker of a specifically female identity.

10. Cf. Popham 1984, 172–173. The spouted cylindrical vessel of LM I period, which is often called pyxis (Alexiou 1954, 404), is a form belonging to the same family, intended less for storing than for pouring. A collection of Cretan pyxides is in Kanta 1980, passim.

11. An example is the ivory pyxis from Katsamba, Tomb H, which is attributed to LM IIIA, Alexiou 1967, 59–63, 73–75, pls. 30–33; Poursat 1977a, 25. On ivory in the Aegean, Krzyszkowska 1990; see also Burns 2010, 95–100.

12. The few clay pyxides found in tombs and datable to the LM IIIA1 may have been placed in their funerary contexts in the LM IIIA2. With the exception of pyxis IIB.792 of LM IIIA1 date, the pottery assemblage of Mochlos Tomb 7 dates back to LM IIIA2 (Soles 2008, 142). In tomb *ιδ. Μ. Ιαννουλάκη* at Maroulas the pottery context has been dated to LM IIIA1 or IIIA2 early (Papadopoulou 2011, 615, figs. 8–9), and the same chronology may be valid for Tomb 17 at Olous (van Effenterre 1948, 8–9, 51–52, pl. XXXIV).

13. The large pyxis found in Room 5 (h. 17; rim diam. 22) is decorated with a figure-of-eight shield, a motif that seems to have been linked with the female sphere (Rehak 2009). In Room 4, a small pyxis was found in a corner, and a number of beads were collected on the floor next to it.

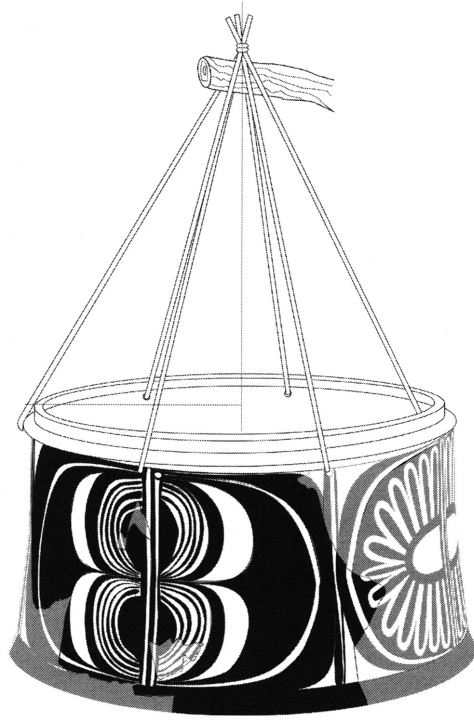


FIG. 14.2 Clay pyxis from Kommos, reconstruction (after Shaw 2011, p. 243, fig. 4).

In the small necropolis of Mochlos, containing 53 individuals corresponding to about 13% of the living population, specific recurrences within a system of moderate variability can be observed (Soles 2008; Soles *et al.* 2011). Considering that access to formal burial was highly selective, the entire buried population of Mochlos should be seen as part of a local elite. Drinking and/or pouring ceremonies, performed on the occasion of burials, are rather common in Cretan tombs of the period (D'Agata 2015; D'Agata and De Angelis 2016). They are well documented at Mochlos by the recurrent presence of trefoil-spouted jugs and pulled-rim bowls found in both male and female tombs. Burial with a banqueting set that includes a kylix and krater (Tomb 15), or with materials of a ritual type (Tomb 15), is reserved solely for men. Jewelry is the exclusive prerogative of women: found on the body of the deceased, or inside clay pyxides or, in one case, a bronze bowl.<sup>14</sup>

Not all female burials have yielded pyxides but this vessel is not apparently found in association with male burials.<sup>15</sup> In Tomb 13 a large, decorated clay pyxis

14. A similar treatment is reserved to the female burials of Odos Palama, at Chania: cf. Hallager and MacGeorge 1992; Leith 2013, 271.

15. In the majority of cases, it is imported from central Crete or from Palaikastro.



FIG. 14.3 Clay pyxis from Kalami Chanion (cf. *Labyrinth*, p. 235, no. 192) (© Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ephorate of Antiquities, Chania Archaeological Museum).

placed near the sarcophagus contained the skeleton of a woman, 18–30 years old. The vessel, which was imported from Palaikastro, dates back to LM IIIA2. A bronze bead and a small bone case, perhaps used to hold sewing needles, were also collected inside it. In Tomb 16 the skeleton of a woman, 18–30 years old, was found within a clay pithos. This was a special tomb, having been connected to Tomb 15 by a tunnel inside which the burial vessel was found. Given this arrangement and the different sex of the two individuals, the hypothesis that the two were a couple has been suggested. The burial in Tomb 16 was also the richest female burial in the necropolis: she wore two necklaces, made of beads in different semiprecious stones, and three bronze rings. The clay vessels found at the center of the chamber included a jug, a bowl, and a small pyxis, alongside a couple of miniature jugs. Tomb 19 contained four burials. An adolescent, probably a female 15–17 years old, was buried inside a clay pithos, together with a remarkable (for the standards of the necropolis) amount of jewelry: a bronze ring, a bronze bracelet, and two necklaces, of glass-paste and stone beads. A jug and a bowl were

found near the mouth of the pithos. Near the base of the burial container, among other vessels, was a small clay pyxis imported from Palaikastro, which may have been associated with the adolescent found inside the pithos.

In the region of Viannos, in a chamber tomb excavated on the slopes of the Trapeza hill at Keratokampos, a female skeleton was found on the floor of the chamber together with some clay vessels. They included a drinking and/or pouring set (cups, bowls, pouring vessels, stirrup jar), and a couple of clay pyxides with lid. The largest of these contained the remains of a necklace, while an earring, of Knossian manufacture, was collected nearby (Banou 2004, 195–204, vessels B9–B10 at figs. 14.11 and 13).

In tomb IV at Metochi Kalou, which yielded some larnakes and numerous burials, a large pyxis (h. 18; rim diam. 17.8) was found in the vicinity of a pit from which the bone remains of earlier burials were collected (Dimopoulou-Rethimiotaki and Rethimiotakis 1978, 44–48, 65–66, fig. 18–19, pl. 16γ). The vessel, dating to LM IIIA2, contained some jewelry; since it was inside a later context (LM IIIB), it must have been reused. This fact is indicative of the intrinsic value ascribed to the vessel, whose life cycle must have crossed generational boundaries.

Voutsaki (1997, 2010, 2012; see also Voutsaki 1995) has shown that the social value of objects is also created by their consumption (display, destruction, deposition) in public ceremonies, like those represented in the wall-painting from Tiryns mentioned previously. Through public use and display, the value of objects becomes fixed in a system of material values that also helped to shape specific identities (on the notion of value, see, recently, Iacono 2016, 102). It is likely that the pyxis was acquired by its owner at a specific point in her life, and that the vessel was carried in procession with the deceased when she was transferred to her tomb. And it is, as we have said, within a similar process of value attribution that the pyxis was used in LM III Crete, albeit sporadically, as a funerary urn for children or females who were buried inside it with the jewelry that they may have owned in life, or have been given after death. In addition to Tomb 13 at Mochlos (Soles 2008, 151–154) we can cite at least another two examples. In tomb II at Aīsa Langadha, a clay pithos was found together with two skulls—one of which was female—and 10 clay vessels. Among them, near the base of the pithos, was a large pyxis with a lid, inside which were the bone remains of a child, of 12–18 months, with one or more necklaces (Boyd Hawes 1908, 59). At Pachyammos Alatzomouri, a chamber tomb yielded three tub-shaped larnakes and remains of human bones inside a pit covered by a tripod tray in cooking ware fabric. Near the pit, a large and elaborately decorated pyxis contained the remains of a burial (“small bones”) and some jewelry (beads in different materials, a pin, two small gold rings) (Alexiou 1954; Soles 2008, 153).

On the basis of this evidence, we can suggest that there was a consolidated bond between the pyxis, its owner, and her family group. That is to say, we should reconstruct multiple social meanings and cultural biographies (Appadurai 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999) for the clay pyxides buried in LM III funerary contexts: they might have alluded to the “coming of age,” to the wealth of the “family,” to female ability to accumulate wealth, and also to the practical activities, and their importance, performed by the woman within the family group.<sup>16</sup> In the 14th and 13th centuries BC on Crete the pyxis is the only clay object that can at present be linked with reasonable certainty to burials of adult, or subadult, female individuals. We should thus reconstruct for it the rapid acquisition of an agency that allowed it to be specifically associated with individuals and perhaps also with family groups, and that was able to give material expression to a female identity within the island’s funerary system.

In conclusion, though in Crete in LM II–IIIA2 Early, female visibility in funerary contexts is far less significant than that of males, and in any case restricted to the highest social level, from LM IIIA2 Early onward the representation of a female social identity takes shape whose indicators include pyxides and jewelry. This process appears to be based on the agency of special objects, with which the “identitarian” representation of individuals and the social importance of the family group became associated. The active role played by the Cretan clay pyxis can be considered representative of the way in which the reproduction in a different material of luxury “objects with biographies” is embedded in a process of symbolic appropriation of social meanings attached to material culture, which gave rise to local systems of practices and values, and constituted one of the founding mechanisms for the renewal of the social fabric in LM II–III Crete.

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#### ABBREVIATION

*Labyrinth*: M. Andreadaki-Vlasaki, G. Rethemiotakis, and N. Demopoulou-Rethemiotaki (eds.) *From the Land of the Labyrinth: Minoan Crete, 3000–1100 B.C., Catalogue of the Exhibition Held at the Onassis Cultural Center, New York, March 13–September 13, 2008*, vols. 1–2, printed in Greece, 2008.

16. On women, boxes, and their metaphorical values in Late Geometric and Classical Greece, see Langdon 2001; Lissarague 1995.

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