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Early Helladic I at Kontopigado, Alimos: The pottery from Pit I

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Frühhelladisch I in Kontopigado, Alimos: Die Keramik aus Grube I

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG Der Übergang von der Jungsteinzeit zur Frühbronzezeit markiert eine der entscheidenden technologischen und sozialen Entwicklungen der Menschheitsgeschichte. In Griechenland fand dieser Übergang am Ende des 4. Jahrtausends v. Chr. statt. Zwar ist in Attika diese Periode gut im archäologischen Fundgut vertreten, doch sind bislang nur wenige Fundplätze vollständig und systematisch veröffentlicht worden. In diesem Beitrag stellen wir die Keramik aus einer Grube in der frühhelladischen (FH) Siedlung bei Kontopigado, Alimos, im Südosten Athens vor. Deren Inhalt ergab eine beträchtliche Vielfalt an Gefäßformen und Warenarten, wahrscheinlich aus einer relativ kurzen Zeitspanne der FH I-Phase. Die Funde können als Referenzmaterial für eine bestimmte Unterphase des FH I dienen und geben desweiteren Aufschluss über Konsumpräferenzen, Kontakte und Aktivitäten der Bewohner von Kontopigado am Beginn der Bronzezeit.
Schlagwörter Frühbronzezeit; Kontopigado; Attika; Keramik; ›cheese pot‹.

ABSTRACT The transition from the Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age marks one of the crucial technological and social developments in human history. In Greece this transition occurred at the end of the 4th millennium B.C. This period is well represented in Attica's archaeological record, although only few sites have been fully and systematically published. In this article we present the pottery from a pit in the Early Helladic (EH) settlement at Kontopigado, Alimos, in the southeast of Athens. The deposit yielded a considerable variety of vessel shapes, wares, and fabrics, probably dating to a relatively short time span of the EH I phase. The material may serve as reference for a specific sub-phase within EH I and furthermore sheds light on consumption preferences, contacts, and activities of the inhabitants at Kontopigado at the beginning of the Bronze Age.
Keywords Early Bronze Age; Kontopigado; Attica; pottery; ›cheese pot‹.

Πρώιμη Ελλαδική I στο Κοντοπήγαδο Αλίμου: Τα κεραμικά από τον Λάκκο I

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ Η μετάβαση από τη νεολιθική στην πρώιμη εποχή του χαλκού σηματοδοτεί μια περίοδο καθοριστικών τεχνολογικών και κοινωνικών εξελίξεων στην ιστορία της ανθρωπότητας. Στην Ελλάδα η συγκεκριμένη μετάβαση έλαβε χώρα στο τέλος της 4ης χιλιετίας π. Χ. Αν και στην Αττική η περίοδος αυτή εκπροσωπείται καλά, εντούτοις μέχρι τώρα, λίγες μόνο θέσεις έχουν δημοσιευτεί πλήρως και συστηματικά. Στο συγκεκριμένο άρθρο, παρουσιάζουμε την κεραμική από έναν λάκκο στον πρωτοελλαδικό (ΠΕ) οικισμό Κοντοπήγαδο Αλίμου, στα νοτιοανατολικά της Αθήνας. Ο συγκεκριμένος λάκκος απέδωσε μια σημαντική ποικιλία κεραμικών σχημάτων και κατηγοριών, πιθανώς από μια σχετικά βραχεία χρονική περίοδο της ΠΕ Ι. Τα ευρήματα είναι δυνατόν να χρησιμεύσουν ως υλικό αναφοράς για μια συγκεκριμένη υποφάση της ΠΕ Ι, ενώ συν τοις άλλοις παρέχουν πληροφορίες σχετικά με τα έθιμα κατανάλωσης, τις επαφές και τις δραστηριότητες των κατοίκων του Κοντοπήγαδου στις αρχές της εποχής του χαλκού.
Λέξεις-κλειδιά Πρώιμη εποχή του χαλκού. Κοντοπήγαδο. Αττική. Κεραμικά. ›cheese pot‹.

1. INTRODUCTION. THE EARLY BRONZE AGE AT KONTOPIGADO

The following paper discusses some preliminary results from the study of an EH I (ca. 3100/3000–2700 B.C.) deposit excavated in the eastern part of the settlement at Kontopigado. Its significance lies in new information it provides regarding pottery typology and the exchange within a Saronic and western Aegean network. The rescue excavations at Kontopigado conducted by Konstantina Kaza-Papageorgiou and the former B' Service of Antiquities brought to light remains of the EH period suggesting a dense occupation at the site during this period with evidence for metallurgic activities and the processing of obsidian cores[1]. Most EH remains belong to pits but walls and floors of some houses were also preserved under the Mycenaean settlement. These contained large amounts of pottery and small finds. Moreover, a characteristic feature of the area was the presence of two streambeds that were excavated between the houses of the settlement and were filled by stones and pottery. It soon became clear that the Early Bronze Age remains at Kontopigado represent two different periods of occupation, dated in EH I and EH II respectively. EH II was more widespread while EH I finds were more concentrated in the southeastern part, in the area of the so-called Building Complex II on the plot of the ΟΑΕΔ (Οργανισμός Απασχόλησης Εργατικού Δυναμικού) *(fig. 1)* and to a lesser extent in the area of the well preserved Mycenaean settlement unit (Building Complex I)[2].

The study of the material confirms the general notion that the transition from EH I to EH II marks a period with significant changes. At Kontopigado these changes are not only related to ceramic developments, i.e. the introduction of new vessel shapes, wares and fabrics or the abandonment of others, they are also observable in activities within the settlement. In particular, evidence for metallurgic activities seems to cease after EH I. This evidence consisted of clay moulds and bronze residues[3] but it is of yet unknown extent since related installations are missing. If the latter have existed they may have been destroyed by modern construction that has erased large parts of the original topography of the area. Finally, the streambed running in north-south direction in the higher part (Building Complex II)[4] and at least two pits carved in bedrock there were filled in EH I and were partly overbuilt by EH II houses. In one of these houses an intact clay seal was discovered[5].

The detailed study of the EH pottery from Kontopigado is in process and is planned to cover aspects of typology, production and provenance with detailed statistical and typological analyses of all the material, as well as with petrographic and chemical analyses on a

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The following abbreviations are used throughout the paper, in addition to those commonly employed under DAI guidelines:

CMS	Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel
CMF	Calcareous micaceous fabric
GMF	Gold Mica fabric
RBSF	Red brown sandy fabric
SMF	Schist / Mica fabric
EBA	Early Bronze Age
EC	Early Cycladic
EH	Early Helladic
LH	Late Helladic
Diam.	Diameter

[1] See Kaza-Papageorgiou 1993; Καζά-Παπαγεωργίου et al. 2011, 201; Kaza-Papageorgiou 2016b, 94 for the history of the excavation.

[2] Kaza-Papageorgiou 1993, 66 f. For Mycenaean Building Complexes I and II see Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2018, 2–4.

[3] Kaza-Papageorgiou 1993, 66.

[4] The second streambed, further to the west in Building Complex I, was 3.5 m wide and it was filled in EH II (Καζά-Παπαγεωργίου – Καρδαμάκη 2012, 171).

[5] CMS V, 460 no. 306.

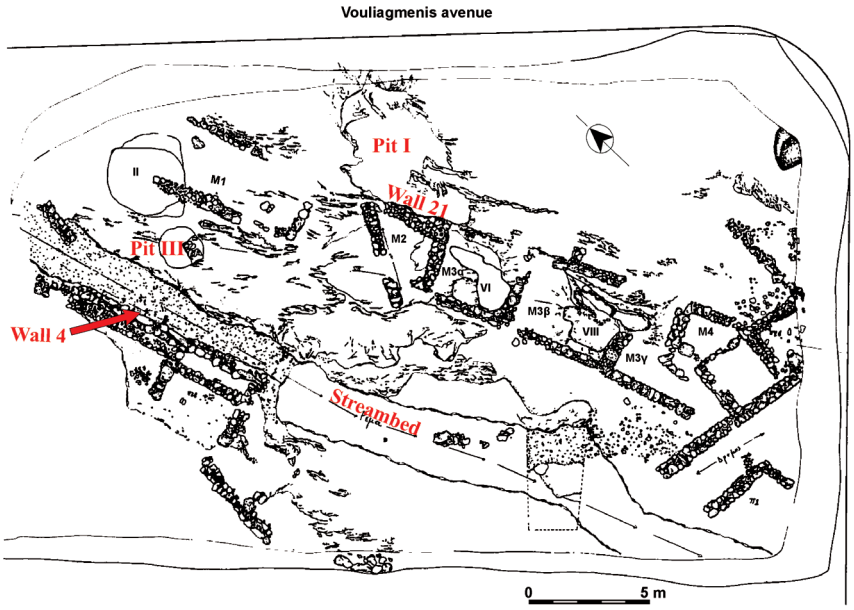

Fig. 1 Kontopigado, Building complex II (ΟΑΕΔ), Excavation plan

Fig. 2 Obsidian tools and chips from the streambed

large group of EH I and EH II samples. The analytical study of the material is under preparation by Evin Chian and Peter Day. The study of the material brings some important new insights. EH I is usually considered to be a period during which settlements depended on the consumption of pottery that was locally produced and with a more restricted circulation of goods. This seems to have changed only towards the end of this period[6]. The pottery from Kontopigado, however, suggests that the settlement was maintaining close connections to Aegina, since a significant proportion of pottery was imported from there. Other pottery features belong to types with a wide distribution in the Aegean and the Anatolian coast. Connections with the island of Melos are demonstrated by the large numbers of unworked or half worked obsidian tools found within EH I levels from Kontopigado *(fig. 2)*.

[6] Alram-Stern – Horejs 2018, 13 f.

In the following chapter the pottery from an EH I assemblage (Pit I) will be presented. The characteristic fabrics of the assemblage will be discussed in terms of typology, wares and frequencies. The analysis is accompanied by a catalogue and illustrations of a representative sample of pottery fragments. The final part of the paper is dedicated to a comment on the chronology of the deposit in Pit I and to some concluding remarks about the significance of this material.

2. EH I OCCUPATION IN BUILDING COMPLEX II

The EH I remains at Building Complex II consist of two pits (Pit I and III), and the fill of a stream in north-south direction. Pit III was opened on the east bank of the streambed while Pit I is 7 m further to the east of Pit III (see below and *fig. 1*). Both pits were carved into bedrock consisting of limestone and schist. Pit III is round and 0.80 m deep. Its diameter narrows from 1.50–1.70 m on the mouth to 0.90 m at the bottom of the pit. Pit III contained a small amount of very fragmented pottery giving the impression of material that was washed down after the pit went out of use. Among the finds worth mentioning are a fragment of a clay mould and a *tuyère*.

The excavated part of the streambed is 33 m long and was divided into a northern and a southern part *(fig. 1)*. The southern part is 21 m long and 2.50 m wide and approximately 1.60 m deep. Where the northern and the southern part meet, the bottom of the streambed falls off abruptly for about 0.80 m[7]. The north part is 0.80 m deep, 12 m long and its west side is flanked by a 0.80 m thick wall (Wall 4). The latter is a part of an EH II structure founded on top of the EH I fill that was used to level the bed of the stream. The further course of the stream to the south and to the north is unknown due to its destruction in modern times. The fill of the streambed contained a lot of rubble. In some areas, the stones formed piles. The size of the rocks varies from one concentration to another from very small (2 × 3 cm) to slightly bigger (4 × 7 cm). Larger stones (10–15 × 20–30 cm) appeared occasionally in the north part of the stream at its bottom and its southern limit. The fill directly at the bottom of the stream contained more soil and stones and smaller quantities of pottery. This layer may derive from the period when the stream came out of use. Apart from pottery the fill of the stream contained a large number of obsidian blades, cores and *débitage*.

2.1. Pit I

Pit I is a cavity of irregular shape that was artificially cut into bedrock. The maximum east-west length is 4.50 m and in north-south direction 5 m. The depth of the pit ranges between 0.50 and 0.70 m. To the west the pit was bordered by Wall 21, a rubble wall constructed of medium size field stones. The fill of the pit represents a single deposition as suggested by the pottery cross-joins between different find groups inside the pit (see below). It consisted of stones, many sherds and small lenses of soil. The pottery was collected in twelve find groups that represent excavation units and not different stratigraphic units (find groups: 69. 70. 72–74. 78–80. 115. 171–173).

Find groups 72. 74. 78. 80. 115 derive from the fill of the pit. These are pure EH I units free of later contamination or, in the case of 72, 78 and 115, with only one clearly later sherd. Groups 73 and 79 contained three and five LH sherds respectively. Groups 69, 70, 171, 172

[7] Kaza-Papageorgiou 2016b, 26 fig. 34. It cannot be excluded that the streambed has been partly artificially shaped.

and 173 come from the upper parts of the pit. These contain a higher proportion of later material *(see below)* and must be interpreted as mixed. Small finds from Pit I include obsidian blades and flakes, a fully preserved spindle whorl and a fragment from a second one, as well as two sherds with bronze / copper residue on their surface. There are no animal bones and only one oyster shell.

2.2. The pottery

The pottery presented in this paper was found entirely within the fill of Pit I in Building Complex II. The area was excavated in twelve separate find groups *(see above)*. Among the uppermost find groups, 69 and 70 contained an admixture of 12 % and 19 % Late Helladic sherds respectively, while find group 171 was mixed with pottery from the Classical period. Find groups 172 and 173 were very small and yet each contained one LH sherd. All these find groups were dismissed from the statistical analysis. The remaining seven find groups (72–74. 78–80. 115) represent the intact part of the deposit and contained some 1240 sherds after mending fresh breaks and before mending old breaks. The deposit consists only of sherd material and no single entire profile was preserved although considerable time was invested in finding joins. This suggests that the finds dumped in Pit I represent domestic refuse that was in a fragmented state at the time of deposition. Almost all find groups are connected by joining sherds at least to one of the other find groups inside the deposit. In addition, one join between 73 and 69 indicates that at least part of find group 69 belongs to this deposit as well.

After the mending of old breaks 1179 vessel fragments remained. This figure constitutes the statistical basis for the present analysis. Of some 312 diagnostic sherds, 282 were preserved well enough to allow pencil illustration, of which 81 were catalogued for the present article. The sample was selected to represent all types and wares of all fabrics in at least one example. None of the fragments in Pit I are necessarily later than EH I except for one possible EH II body sherd and eleven others which clearly date in the Late Helladic period. The latter are fragments of fine Mycenaean wheel-made pottery and their low proportion of 0.9 % suggests that they are intrusive. They mainly come from the higher situated find groups 73 and 79, and if they are eliminated the proportion of Mycenaean contamination among the remaining 871 sherds would further drop to 0.3 %. In contrast, most significant is the total absence of EH II fine ware, sauceboats and saucers on small ring bases. The homogenous character of the fill thus promises an important contribution to our understanding of ceramic typology and chronology in South Attica at the beginning of the Bronze Age. Moreover, the studied material allows detailed insights into activities and contacts of the local population at that time.

Among the variables to describe the catalogued fragments are: sherd type, size category[8], rim / base diameter, percent of rim / base preservation, degree of abrasion, vessel shape, handle type, decoration, Munsell colour, surface treatment, technical observations, use wear, fabric and ware. Information concerning the sizes and densities of the different kinds of inclusions[9] visible in the sherds was recorded in detail and contributed to the differentia-

[8] For the classification small (< 5 cm), medium (5–10 cm), big (> 10 cm) see Stockhammer 2008, 70. See also Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2018, 4–6.

[9] The size of inclusions – referring to the maximum size of a temper component occurring in regular amounts – was noted in the following size categories: powder-size, 0.02 cm, 0.05 cm, 0.1 cm, 0.15 cm, 0.2 cm, 0.25 cm etc. The density of individual components was estimated on a 6-tier scale: none, very low, low, moderate, high, very high.

tion of macroscopic fabric groups[10]. The bulk of the material (non-catalogued feature sherds and non-feature sherds) was separated into fabric groups, counted and the size category for each sherd was noted. This was conducted for each find group separately in order to detect possible variations in the composition of each find group within the deposit. Indeed, some variations between certain find groups were detected regarding sherd size and the proportions of fabric groups and vessel types, however, other typological aspects of the pottery and the presence of cross-joins between different find groups make it seem legitimate to treat the fill of Pit I as a coherent deposit.

In the following paragraph the macroscopic fabric groups are briefly described and an overview of the shapes and decorations within each fabric group is given. A separate typological discussion for each fabric group was found useful because in many cases particular shapes correlate quite closely with particular fabric groups. The pottery from Pit I generally comprises a relatively narrow range of open and closed vessel shapes, basically open bowls, deep bowls, large shallow bowls, narrow-necked jars, wide-mouthed jars and the so-called cheese pots. Due to the fragmented character of the material we were reluctant to employ a finer classification according to vessel shape as was possible for example for the finds from Tsepi[11]. Our focus on feature sherds emphasizes variations in the types of rims and lips, of which some appear to be of chronological significance. The repertoire of the Schist / Mica fabric shows certain variability in rim shapes and may serve as an adequate starting point for the typological discussion.

Schist / Mica fabric (SMF)

This fabric comprises around two thirds of the sherd material *(tab. 1. 2)* and can be interpreted as locally manufactured. It is usually medium coarse with a moderate to very high density of dull shiny silvery platelets between 1 and 3 mm. If powder-size sparkling inclusions are present, they occur in high or very high densities as well. The majority of sherds of the SMF also include organic temper that left voids in the shape of plant seeds or grass chaff. Notably, any kinds of dark-coloured inclusions are absent. Surfaces are unsmoothed or smoothed but very rarely burnished. The colour of the clay is usually red (2.5YR 5/6–8) but can shift occasionally to light brown or brown (7.5YR 5/4) – sometimes on the very same sherd. Although no fresh breaks were produced, the cores of the sherds mostly appear to be grey.

SMF was almost exclusively used for plain ware and for ›cheese pots‹. Other wares like Red slipped and burnished *(fig. 3, 1)* and, perhaps, Black burnished wares *(fig. 10, 73)* are very rarely made in this fabric. The most common shape in SMF is an open bowl with conical, slightly convex profile *(fig. 3, 2–9)*. Extreme deviations from this basic shape towards either semi-globular or straight-sided are rare. Most commonly the lip is rounded or slightly pointed *(fig. 3, 2. 3)*. Small versions with rim diameters between 10 and 13 cm have similarly simple rims *(fig. 3, 3)*. In two cases a conical body ends in a slightly inwards turned lip that has been produced by pressure on the exterior lip to tell from the characteristic flattened area (e.g. *fig. 3, 4*). This rim type can be seen as the forerunner of the typical EH II bowl or saucer with incurved rim[12]; our *fig. 3, 4*, however, belongs to a large basin-like vessel with a reconstructed rim diameter of 30.5 cm. While this rim type is rare among the open bowls

[10] The macroscopic fabric groups were defined after careful inspection of every single sherd, including the non-feature sherds, under sunlight. No magnifier was used but the groups are easily distinguishable with bare eye. Munsell colours of fractures were only measured in cases when the sherd had a fresh break.

[11] Παντελίδου-Γκόφα 2016.

[12] Mylonas 1959, fig. 53; Weißhaar 1983, fig. 13, 2. 4–6; Wiencke 2000; Pullen 2011, 73.

	Feature sherds			Feature sherds ›Cheese pots‹			Feature sherds without ›Cheese pots‹		
Fabric	dia	rim	base	dia	rim	base	dia	rim	base
SMF	225 72.1 %	132 70.6 %	61 (69)	44 91.7 %	34 91.9 %	10 (18)	181 68.6 %	98 65.3 %	51
RBSF	24 7.7 %	13 7.0 %	8	–	–	–	24 9.1 %	13 8.7 %	8
GMF	34 10.9 %	29 15.5 %	4	–	–	–	34 12.9 %	29 19.3 %	4
Calca-reous micace-ous	11 3.5 %	4 2.1 %	5	–	–	–	11 4.2 %	4 2.7 %	5
others	18 5.8 %	9 4.8 %	3 (4)	4 8.3 %	3 8.1 %	1 (2)	14 5.3 %	6 4.0 %	2
total	312 100.0 %	187 100.0 %	81 (90)	48 100.0 %	37 100.0 %	11 (20)	264 100.1 %	150 100.0 %	70

Table 1: Kontopigado Pit I: Counts and proportions of diagnostic sherds, rims and bases among the macroscopic fabric groups. Numbers in parentheses: base sherds included which were already counted as rim sherds

Fabric	total
Schist/Mica	792 67.2 %
Red-brown sandy	64 5.4 %
Gold Mica	166 14.1 %
Calcareous micaceous	71 6.0 %
others	74 6.3 %
EH II?	1 0.1 %
LH	11 0.9 %
total	1179 100.0 %

Table 2: Kontopigado Pit I: Counts and proportions of all sherds among the macroscopic fabric groups

of SMF, another type is very frequent: rims with horizontally flattened lip *(fig. 3, 5–9)*. Those rims are usually slightly thickened but the thickening is never as pronounced as on T-rim bowls of the EH II phase [13]. *Fig. 3, 9* shows a slightly grooved lip and the attachment of what was probably a wide vertical strap handle of ›tunnel‹-type. In three cases the rim has incised decoration (e.g. *fig. 3, 7. 8*). It is difficult to reconstruct the rim diameter of our sherds with flattened lip but they tend to belong to larger bowls or basins.

Another very common shape in SMF is the deep bowl with globular body *(fig. 3, 1. 10. 11)*. Seven out of nine reconstructed rim diameters were in the range of 13 to 18 cm. For *fig. 3, 10* a diameter of ca. 21 cm was reconstructed. Like most of the rounded deep bowls this piece has a rounded lip, however, flattened rims (although hardly ever thickened) do occur as well. The latter feature can be observed on one fragment with handle attachment and a decoration of horizontally incised lines underneath the rim *(fig. 3, 11)*[14]. On deep rounded bowls decoration is generally rare: *fig. 3, 11* is the only incised decorated example and only two rim sherds were red slipped and burnished. On one of them *(fig. 3, 1)*, the interior is monochrome painted, while any paint on the exterior may have worn off completely.

[13] Mylonas 1959; Weißhaar 1983, fig. 12, 17–19; Wiencke 2000.

[14] Exact parallels for this type of bowl can be found at Tsepi (Παντελίδου-Γκόφα 2016, pl. 89, 1712. 2074. 2081; 90, 2089. 2342).