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GREEK POTTERS AT AL MINA?

By JOHN BOARDMAN

THE SUBJECT OF this paper is a small group of cups found by Sir Leonard Woolley in his excavations at Al Mina (now in the Turkish Hatay). It has been hitherto ignored because, with some reason, the vases were believed neither to be Greek imports nor the products of Cypriot or North Syrian potters.¹ I hope to demonstrate that they could be the work of Greek potters established at Al Mina towards the end of the 8th century B.C. by discussing their apparent relationship to contemporary Greek, Cypriot and North Syrian work. Most of the cups and fragments are in Oxford, and there are fragments in the London Institute of Archaeology and the Museum of Classical Archaeology in Cambridge which I have seen. Nos. 1-23 in Fig. 1 and Plates XXIV-XXV illustrate the shapes and all the types of decoration met in the group.

All are two-handled cups, the Greek geometric *skyphos*. The shape, with decoration of this type, is most common in Euboeo-Cycladic vases of the second half of the 8th century, and a considerable number of these *skyphoi* were carried to Al Mina by the Greeks.² It was rarely imitated in Cyprus, as we shall see, and is not at home further east.

The fabric is a pale pink or buff, sometimes covered with a thin cream slip. It is appreciably paler than the Euboeo-Cycladic cups, and does not closely resemble any Cypriot ware. However, the fabric of much North Syrian pottery, and of the suspected local wares of Al Mina is very similar. This, coupled with the fact that the class is virtually unknown outside Al Mina, makes it highly probable that it was manufactured near, if not at the site. The proportions of the cups, and their thin, well-fired walls, are exactly like those of the Greek cups. This fine technique might also be attributed to North Syrian potters, although hardly to Cypriots.

On many of the cups a deliberate bichrome effect was achieved by the use of paints ranging from red to dark grey. The style is foreign to North Syria, but well known in Cyprus. However, the Cypriot colours are very different in appearance and far more regular in tone. It would seem that the painters of our cups were not masters of the technique but, except for the greys, were exploiting the colour range which is found in Greek Geometric pottery. But, although the paint of Greek Geometric

¹ After the preliminary report in *AJ.* XVII (1937), 1-15, the excavator published an account of the site and finds in *JHS.* LVIII (1938), 1-30, 133-170. The early Greek pottery has been published by C. M. Robertson in *JHS.* LX (1940), 2-21, and cf. *JHS.* LXVI (1946), 66; Woolley, *JHS.* LXVIII (1948), 148; Boardman, *BSA.* LII (1957), 5-8, *Historia* VII (1958), 250. For the later, Attic vases see J. D. Beazley, *JHS.* LIX (1939), 1-44. Miss Joan du Plat Taylor is engaged on a study of the Cypriot and locally-produced wares from the site. I am deeply indebted to her for discussing the pottery with me and reading through a draft of this paper. (See now *Iraq* XXI (1959), 62-92.)

² Cf. Boardman, *BSA.* LII (1957), 5 f., 24 f.

vases may fire red or black, deliberate bichromy was not attempted. Thinned paint occasionally gives a bi-tonal effect in some Attic, Corinthian and East Greek work,³ but it is only later, and only on some plainer Chian vases (unpublished), that a deliberate use of black and red in the Cypriot manner is found. The occasional addition of white on some Late Geometric vases,⁴ and later of red, is in a quite different spirit from the balanced bichromy of the Cypriot vases and of some of the Al Mina cups. The polychrome vases of 7th-century Knossos are yet another conception, not Cypriot-inspired.

By their inner decoration the cups can be divided into two classes. The examples with more elaborately decorated exteriors are completely painted within except for one or two reserved lines in the lip and a disc at the base (cf. Fig. 1, 23). The scheme is that of the Greek cups. The inside of a Cypriot cup or bowl of this period is generally not completely painted in this way. The second class has lines only within the lip and a spiral band lower in the bowl (cf. 20, Fig. 1, Plate XXV). The scheme is exactly that of most Cypro-Geometric open vases, and is quite unknown in Greece.

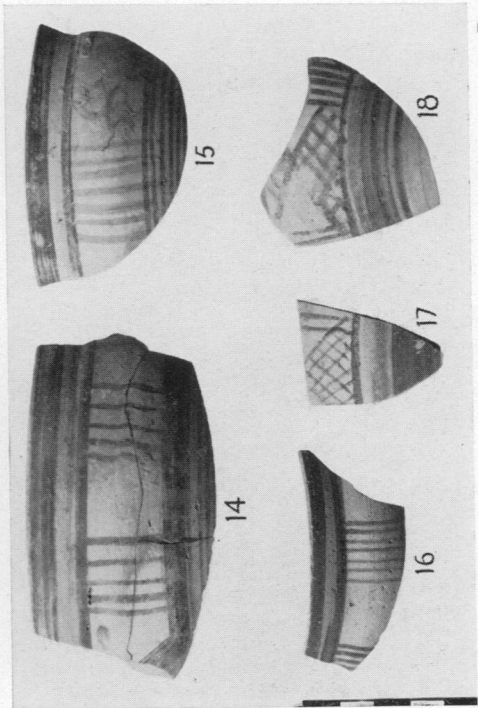
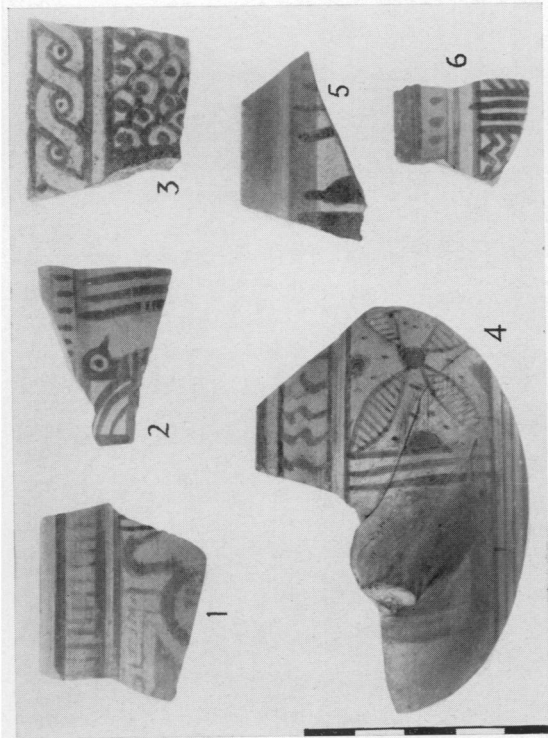
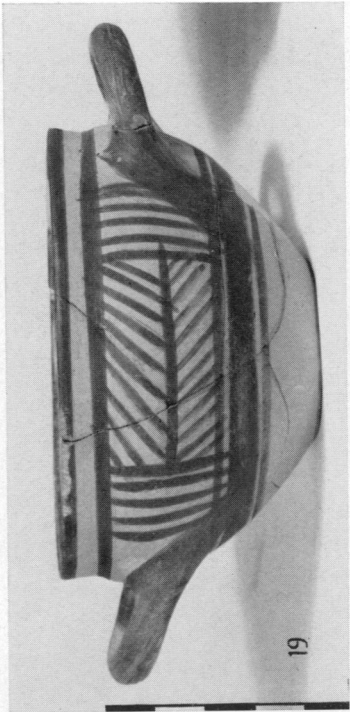
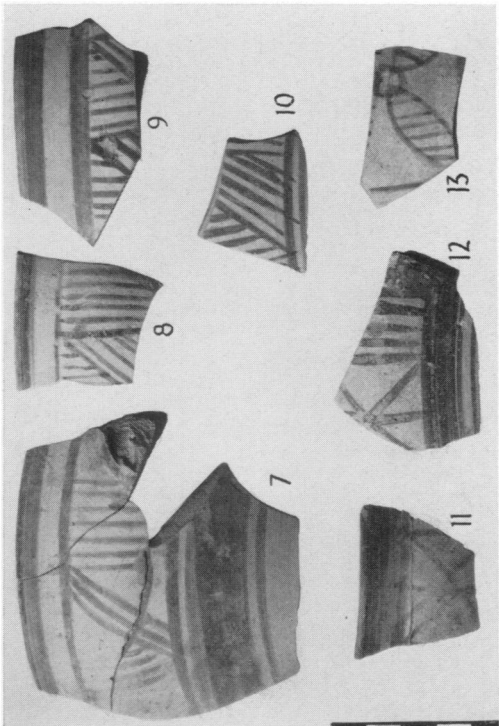
The elements of the external decoration of the cups are entirely Greek in origin, and can be paralleled on the Euboeo-Cycladic cups imported to Al Mina. But they are also the motifs which were most readily copied in Cyprus, and some appear here in a form closer to the Cypriot adaptations than to the Greek originals. Thus, the quatrefoil decoration of 4 is common on Greek cups of this shape, but the filling device at the side border is a semicircle, as on some Cypriot examples of the motif,⁵ and not the usual Greek triangles⁶ (which appear at the top and bottom borders). The birds on 1 and 2 have raised wings as on Cypriot, Euboeo-Cycladic and Cretan vases, but not on mainland Greek ones. The hatched triangles (8-10), crosses (11, 12) and opposed hatched triangles (17, 18) are also Greek Geometric motifs which appear on Cypriot vases. On the other hand, the decoration in the handle zones of 14-16, 20-23 is most distinctively Greek. It is a style of decoration allied to a particular technique—the free-hand use of the multiple brush. This technique is a hall-mark of Greek Geometric pottery, and can almost be said to have dictated the decoration of lesser vases, though it was certainly not scorned by the better vase-painters. Its significance has not generally been recognised, but this is no place for a discussion of its use in different

³ e.g. *Kerameikos* V, 1, pl. 87, 3951 (Attic); F. Johansen, *Les Vases Sicyoniens* 36, for the practice in Protocorinthian; *BSA*. XXXV (1934-5), pl. 37, 24 and 28 (Chian); many other unpublished examples from the excavations at Emporio). Something of the same effect is found on Myc. III vases.

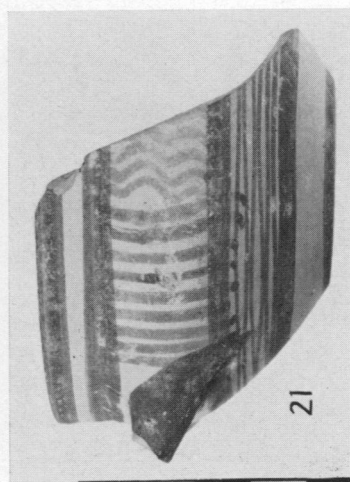
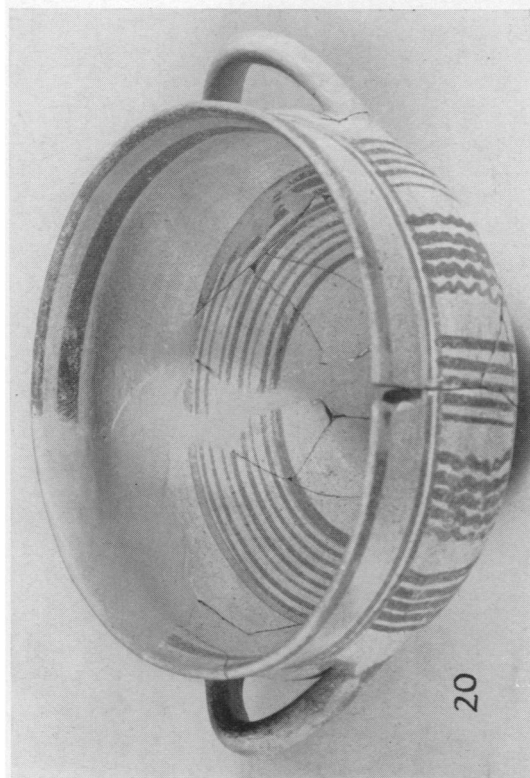
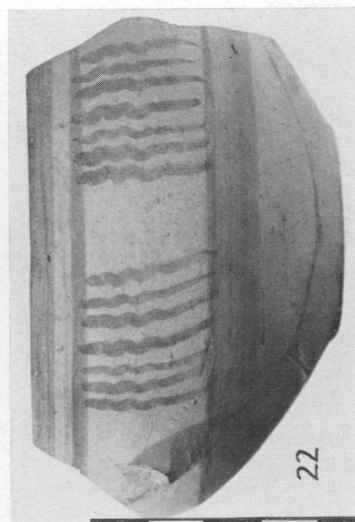
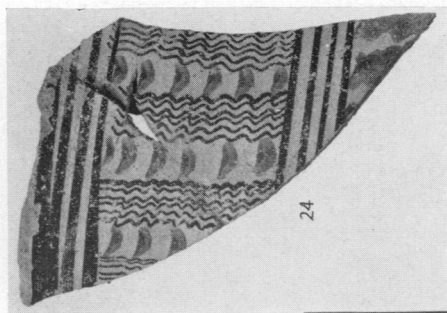
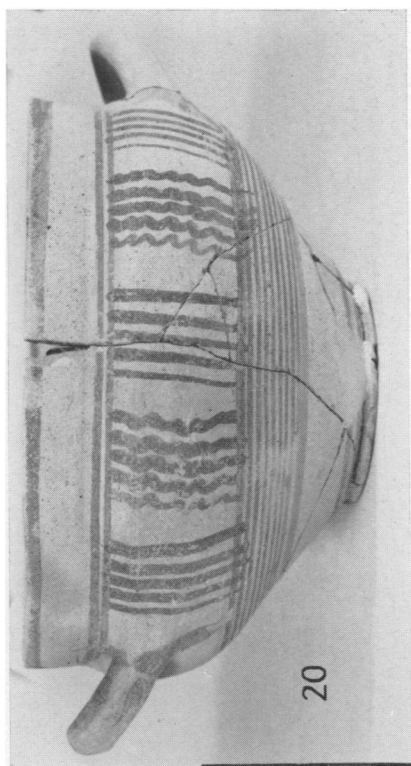
⁴ Notably the "slip-filled" patterns on some Euboean cups of a type found at Al Mina; cf. *BSA*. XLVII (1952), pl. 1B, 10-27; LII (1957), pl. 2(a)a; *Praktika* 1952, 162, fig. 10.

⁵ Cf. *Swedish Cyprus Expedition* II, pl. 166, i.1533.

⁶ e.g. *JHS*. LX (1940), 5, fig. 21 (Al Mina, Euboeo-Cycladic); *Kerameikos* V, 1, pls. 35, 59, 97, 111, 118-120 (Attic).



Pottery from Al Mina.



Pottery from Al Mina.

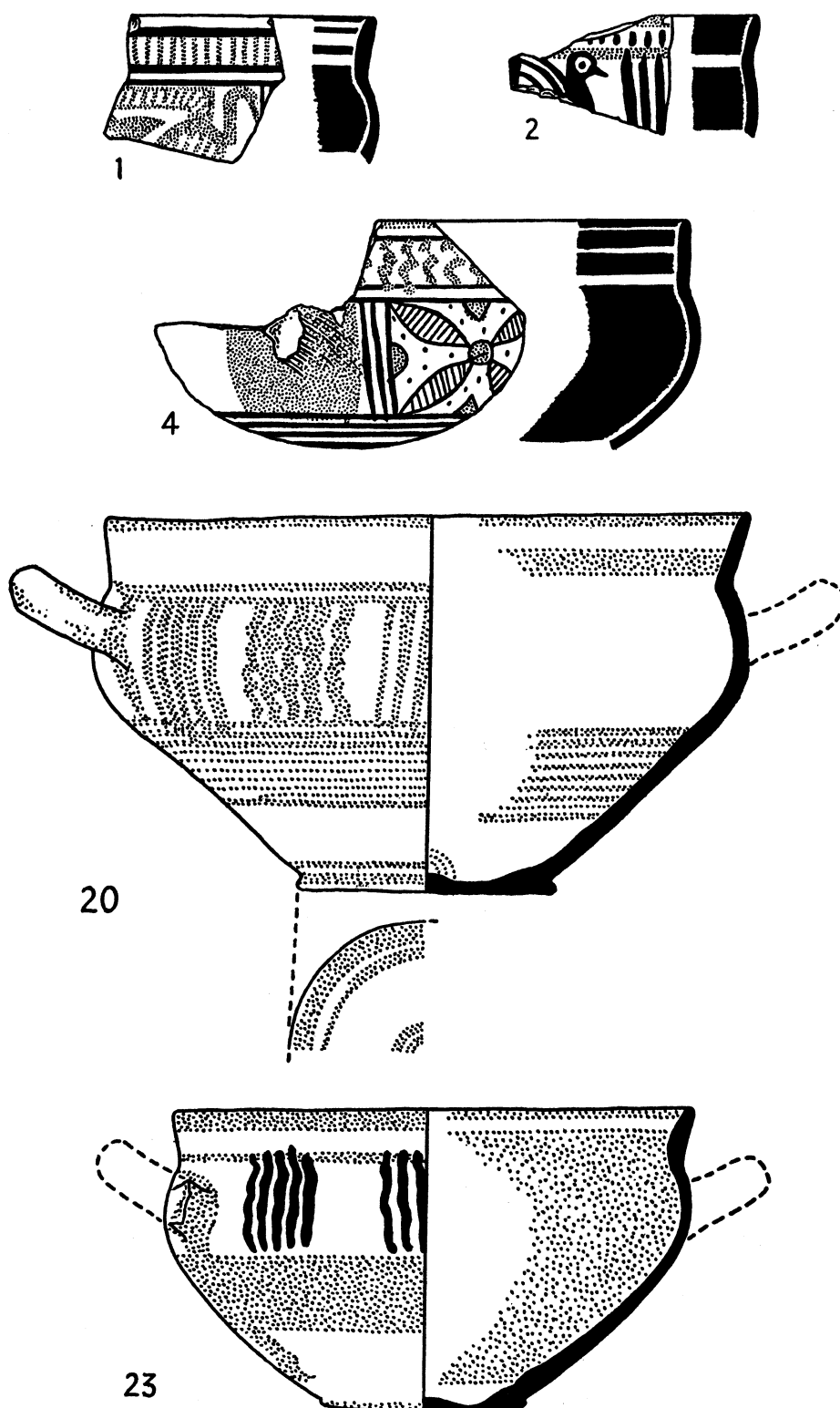


FIG. 1.

Greek wares.⁷ It appears on various Cypriot Bronze Age vases⁸ but its later history in the island is very different. In Cypro-Geometric it is used only with a compass for the small concentric circles which are so characteristic of the period. But it was not used for the groups of concentric circles with larger diameter which appear on many of the spherical flasks; nor was it used free-hand, as it had been in the Bronze Age, although the metope decoration of many White Painted and Bichrome vases would seem to invite it.⁹ The same is true of the pottery of Syria and Palestine in this period; indeed the use of small concentric circles as a decorative pattern might have reached Cyprus from this area.¹⁰

From what has been said it seems likely that the *skyphoi* were made in Al Mina. Some of the decoration has a strong Cypriot flavour; not surprising in a town in which there was apparently a Cypriot pottery in this period, and whose folk were most familiar with Cypriot wares. However, the technique of the *skyphoi*, and particularly the free-hand use of the multiple brush, seem to indicate Greek hands. Again, hardly surprising in view of the concentration of Greek interest in Al Mina from the early 8th century, and especially of those Greeks to whom this style of pottery was most familiar: the Greeks of Euboea and the Cyclades.

The only other explanation of these vases which might be entertained is that they were made by Cypriots in Al Mina. Arguments *for* are the comparisons drawn above, notably the discriminate choice of Greek decorative motifs; *against*, are the inefficient bichromy, the free-hand use of the multiple brush and the fine potting.

Skyphoi of this general type are not, however, entirely lacking in Cyprus itself. Mr. Karageorghis has told me of a few examples in Cyprus Museum which do not seem Cypriot. In the British Museum C1001 has a quatrefoil pattern and zigzags, uses a multiple brush, is bichrome and has a spiral band within; the fabric is good.¹¹ C994 has a multiple brush pattern like our 22, 23, is bichrome and is painted inside, as 23; this is very like the Al Mina cups.¹² Gjerstad mentions *skyphoi* from the Swedish Excavations in Cyprus, some of which he considers Greek imports, others imitations.¹³ One of them resembles the Al Mina *skyphoi* in its use of the

⁷ I intend to publish a brief survey of the use of the multiple brush on Greek and Near Eastern pottery, in which the points mentioned here will be developed.

⁸ In the Late Bronze Age on White Slip II, Base Ring II.

⁹ The multiple brush was used free-hand on the compass for the hooks on vases like CVA British Museum II, pl. 1, 5 and 16. Otherwise perhaps only on the unusual vase, *Swedish Cyprus Expedition* II, pl. 104, A.13.40 (= IV, 2, fig. xxii.1), for the crosses. My evidence for this generalisation is not as complete as it might be. I have only examined Cypriot vases in Oxford and London. For the detection of the use of a multiple brush only a good photograph can replace autopsy.

¹⁰ Cf. O. Tufnell, *Lachish* III, 296 ff.; *Swedish Cyprus Expedition* IV, 2, 270, n. 1.

¹¹ *BMC Vases* I, 2, 206. From Salamis.

¹² CVA. II, pl. 4, 2. From the Sandwith Collection.

¹³ *Swedish Cyprus Expedition* IV, 2, 275. For some other *skyphoi* see CVA. British Museum II, pl. 4, 1 (imitation, no multiple brush); J. L. Myres, *Cesnola Collection* nos. 1703-4 (Greek), 1706 (imitation); A. S. Murray, *Excavations in Cyprus* 110, fig. 160, 3 (Greek); J. du Plat Taylor, *Myrtou-Pighades* 70, fig. 29, 473 (Greek), 474 (imitation); *Arch. Reports* 1957, pl. 4e (imitation).

multiple brush, but its inner decoration is not described.¹⁴ In general the Cypriot imitations of Greek *skyphoi* are coarser in fabric and copy the high-rimmed types. At all events an occasional import from Al Mina or the Syrian coast is to be expected. If Cypriots had ever succeeded in producing such fine ware themselves it is surprising that there is not more of it in the island.

The dating of the group is best provided by the homeland Greek models. The interpretation of the stratigraphy of objects labelled as from the lower levels at Al Mina is not easy ; perhaps impossible. Most of the *skyphoi* whose provenance is known are of Levels 8 and 9. They are thus the contemporaries of the Euboeo-Cycladic vases imported to Al Mina which they so closely resemble ; and the other Greek finds suggest that they belong still to the 8th century,¹⁵ which is what we should expect.

With Greek pottery and potters in Al Mina at this date their influence might be looked for in other local products. The fragment 24 (Plate XXV) is from a large vase, perhaps its foot. The technique is bichrome and the multiple brush is used free-hand in a Greek manner. The patterns too are Greek, particularly Euboean, but their disposition is not. The tall panels appear on some Cypriot vases,¹⁶ but also on the mainland¹⁷ and particularly on vases from Al Mina apparently made by Cypriot potters there. The fragment goes with these, and shows a Cypriot vase-painter, led by contact with Greek vase-painters to use the multiple brush in a manner which he would never have contemplated at home.

At no other site in the E. Mediterranean is the history of Greek and Cypriot ceramics so closely connected. The pottery in Al Mina seems likely to have been the first overseas Greek enterprise of this sort in the Iron Age. This is a period in which the Greeks are learning much from the east, largely through Al Mina, I have no doubt, and it may be that one feature at least which was adopted into the vase-painting of the Euboeo-Cycladic states which dealt with Al Mina was picked up from the Cypriots there. This is the rows of concentric circles on the rims of cups, which are familiar on Cypriot cups and bowls, and especially on vases of Cypriot type at Al Mina, but unknown in Greek Geometric until about the middle of the 8th century, and then only in Euboea and the Cyclades.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Swedish Cyprus Expedition* II, pl. 30, 1 top left (Stylli 2.16).

¹⁵ Robertson, *JHS.* LX (1940), 21, dates the break between Levels 7 and 8 to the very beginning of the 7th century. As Miss Taylor points out to me, Level 7 is rather nebulous. Architecturally it is a continuation of Level 8, and hardly any finds are labelled "Level 7" rather than "Levels 6-7". The break should be *between* Levels 6 and 7 architecturally. Level 7 could be forgotten with no prejudice to the interpretation of the finds.

¹⁶ *Swedish Cyprus Expedition* II, pls. 162, 3 ; 166 (Bichrome IV).

¹⁷ Cf. M. Dunand, *Byblos* II, 145, fig. 139, 7781.

¹⁸ e.g. *JHS.* LX (1940), 5, fig. 2a, c, e (Al Mina ; Euboeo-Cycladic) ; *EADélos* XV, pls. 39, 51 ; 40, 53 ; 41, 59 (Cycladic) ; *BSA.* XLVII (1952), pl. 1B, 7-9 (Euboean). Cypriot vases influence other Greek wares of this period in many other ways which do not concern us here.

CATALOGUE OF THE ILLUSTRATED POTTERY

MP, MN and Level numbers are those recorded on the sherds. Measurements are in centimetres.

1. London Inst. 55.1793. Plate XXIV, Fig. 1. H. 3.3. Pink clay with a dull cream slip outside. Brown paint inside but for three reserved lines in the lip, and outside for the main dividing lines. Red paint for the upright strokes on the lip and the decoration in the handle zone. The bird's wing is raised above its back, and behind it may be a fledgeling.
2. Oxford 1954.371 (MP 98A). Plate XXIV, Fig. 1. H. 2.6. Pink clay with a pale cream slip. Brown paint inside but for a broad reserved line in the lip. Outside, two red lines on the lip, the rest in grey. *JHS*. LX (1940), 19, fig. 8a, may be from the same vase.
3. Oxford 1954.505.5. Plate XXIV. H. 3.1. Pink clay with a pale cream slip ; poor surface. Dark brown paint inside but for a reserved line in the lip. The same colour outside with crimson dots in the scales. This may be Cypriot work and not of the main class discussed here.
4. Oxford 1954.514 (Level 8 ; 193). Plate XXIV, Fig. 1. H. 5.3, W. 8.1. Red clay with a cream slip on the lip and in the handle zone, though not beneath the handle. Red paint inside but for three reserved lines in the lip. Outside, red paint and a dull grey shading into brown.
5. Oxford 1954.379.1. Plate XXIV. H. 2.5. Pink clay with a dull cream slip. Red paint inside but for one reserved line in the lip. Red on the lip outside, the rest in dull brown.
6. Oxford 1954.379.3. Plate XXIV. H. 2.8. Pinkish-buff clay. Red paint inside but for four reserved lines in the lip. Red on the lip outside, the rest in dark grey.
7. Oxford 1954.380. Plate XXIV. H. 7.3. Pinkish-buff clay. Red-brown paint. Inside, two lines at the lip and a spiral band lower in the bowl.
8. Oxford 1954.381.3 (Level 9). Plate XXIV. H. 3.7. Fabric and inside decoration as the last ; the paint more brown.
9. Oxford 1954.381.1 (Level 9). Plate XXIV. H. 3.3. Pink clay. Red-brown paint. Two lines within the lip.
10. Oxford 1954.381.6 (Levels 8/9). Plate XXIV. H. 2.8. As the last. Part of a spiral band inside.
11. London Inst. 55.1811. Plate XXIV. H. 3.1. Pink clay. Red paint. Two lines within the lip.
12. Oxford 1954.383.5. Plate XXIV. H. 3.6. Pinkish-buff clay. Red-brown paint. Painted inside but for a reserved spiral band. This may be Cypriot work as the surface is very rough (cf. 3).
13. Oxford 1954.520.3 (Levels 8/9). Plate XXIV. H. 2.9. Buff clay. Red-brown paint. Part of a spiral band within.
14. Oxford 1954.376. Plate XXIV. H. 5.3. Pink clay. Brown paint. Inside, two lines within the lip and a spiral band lower in the bowl. A quintuple brush used on the outside.
15. Oxford 1954.382.2 (Level 8). Plate XXIV. H. 4.6. Buff clay with a pale cream slip. Red paint, thinned in the handle zone where a shaky septuple brush was used.

16. Oxford 1954.379.4 (Level 7). Plate XXIV. H. 3.0. Pinkish-buff clay. Brown paint inside for two lines in the lip and the top of a spiral band lower in the bowl. Outside, red on the lip, brown in the handle zone, where a septuple brush was used.
17. Oxford 1954.381.11 (Levels 6/7). Plate XXIV. H. 4.2. Pinkish-buff clay with a dull cream slip. Red-brown paint. A spiral band within.
18. Oxford 1954.381.10. Plate XXIV. H. 5.1. Pink clay. Red-brown paint. A spiral band within.
19. Oxford 1937.408 (MN 426). Plate XXIV. H. 5.5. Buff clay with a dull cream slip, and red-brown paint, exactly as 21. Inside, three thin lines in the lip, a spiral band lower in the bowl and a small circle on the base. A multiple brush was not used on the outside. The base treated as on 21.
20. Oxford 1937.409 (MN 425 ; Level 9). Plate XXV, Fig. 1. H. 8.0. Pink clay with a thin cream slip ; the surface is rather pitted. Red paint. Spiral bands below the handle zone, in the bowl and on the slight omphalos at the centre. A sextuple brush was used in the handle zone.
21. Oxford 1954.375 (MP 94). Plate XXV. H. 5.5. Buff clay with a dull cream slip. Red-brown paint. Inside, two lines in the lip, a spiral band lower in the bowl and a small circle at the centre. A brush with nine members was apparently used on the outside. The spiral band below the handle zone is shaky. The painted band at the bottom of the wall edges the flat base also, and at the centre of the base is a small painted circle.
22. Oxford 1954.373. Plate XXV. H. 5.5. Pinkish-buff clay with a buff slip. Faded, dull red paint except in the handle zone where it is a firmer red-brown. Inside, two lines in the lip, a spiral band lower in the bowl and a small circle on the base. A septuple brush used outside.
23. Oxford 1954.372 (MP 181). Fig. 1. H. 6.5-6.9. Light red clay with a buff slip. Dull red paint, very carelessly applied at the handles. Dull black paint applied with a quintuple brush in the handle zone.
24. Oxford 1954.503. Plate XXV. H. 14.8. Pink clay with a thin buff slip. Black, and thin red paint which is used for the blobs between the black wavy lines (sextuple brush) and for thick, vertical wavy lines at the bottom of the sherd. Not painted within. Made by a Cypriot at Al Mina.