

METAXIA TSIPOPOULOU

‘POTTERS’ MARKS’ FROM PETRAS, SITEIA*

1. Introduction: the site

Petras is situated by the sea in Eastern Crete, about 1,500 m east of the town of Siteia. There are four low hills. The first human presence in the area is dated to the end of the Neolithic period (Hill II). Later occupation was continuous from EM II to LM I (Hill I). Early Minoan remains have also been found on Hills III and IV. On Hill I there was a substantial Minoan settlement, dated mainly to the Neopalatial period, even though there is strong evidence of its existence also in the earlier Minoan phases. During LM I, probably at an early stage, the settlement was destroyed, probably by an earthquake, and then abandoned. A part of Hill I was reoccupied in LM IIIA. We have not been able, as yet, to ascertain the extent of the re-occupation, but it seems that it was rather limited. At the same period (LM IIIA) another, probably short-lived, settlement was established on top of Hill II, close to the Neolithic site¹.

* The present study was written at Bristol, during my sabbatical year 1988–1989. I wish to express my gratitude to the following people and institutions who help the excavation at Petras and the study of the material, offering financial and moral support, as well as useful advice: The Greek Ministry of Culture; the Siteia Town Council; the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, New York; the Dr. Aylwin Cotton Foundation; the University of Bristol; Dr. C. Davaras; Professor P. M. Warren; many more friends and colleagues, in Greece and abroad. The archaeologists who participated at the Petras excavation and the processing of the material are: Ms. E. Papatsaroucha (1986–1988), Ms. A. Papacostopoulou (1986–1987), Ms. E. Prokopiou (1986), Mr. J. Pararas (1988) and Ms. O. Matzari (1988). The photographs are by the author, the drawings by Ms. O. Matzari (nos 6, 9, 16, 17, 18) and the author. The plates and figures were printed by Mr. G. Kelsey, of the Photographic Unit, Faculty of Arts, University of Bristol.

¹ On the Petras excavation and survey see the preliminary reports: Μ. Τσιποπούλου, Νέα στοιχεία για τη μινωική κατοίκηση στην περιοχή της πόλης της Σητείας, *Acts of the Sixth International Cretological Congress, Chania 1986*, (in press) and, by the

There are no subsequent remains at Petras, except for a Late Roman tomb², until the era of the Venetian occupation, when a small settlement was constructed on the west slope of Hill I. Later, during the Turkish occupation, this settlement expanded further.

In recent years the area has undergone rapid tourist development. The west slope of Hill II is already entirely covered by hotels. Other parts of the same hill are cultivated, mainly with olive trees, while Hills III and IV, more steep and less close to the beach, are used for pasturage. On Hill I also there are some small hotels and a part of the original settlement is still inhabited. Petras is a designated archaeological site, and a large part of Hill I is in the process of expropriation.

Arthur Evans was the first to discover ancient remains at Petras. He visited the site on April 12th, 1894 and saw some early walls, which he thought were "prehellenic"³. A few years later, in 1900, R. C. Bosanquet conducted a two-day trial excavation. Even though he discovered Minoan buildings on several areas of Hill I, he abandoned the site in favour of the more promising Palaikastro. In fact he was convinced by the local people that the destruction of the ancient remains had been complete during the period of the Turkish occupation⁴.

Systematic investigation began at Petras in 1985, through excavation (Hill I) and intensive surface surveys (Hills I—IV). Many trenches on various areas of Hill I showed that the Minoan occupation of the site was an extensive one, and, in many cases, also well preserved until today. In the past four years have been discovered:

1. A large part of two big two-storey Neopalatial houses on the east slope of the hill.
2. A rectangular building at the NE end of an extended plateau on top of the hill, dated to LM I.
3. Parts of Neopalatial houses on a smaller higher plateau.
4. A terrace wall, 280 m long, also on top of the hill.
5. A series of six magazines, containing pithoi, presumably belonging to an important Neopalatial building at the NW side of the large plateau.

same author, Έρευνες στον Πετρά Σητείας, 1987, Athens Annals of Archaeology, (in press), and Αρχαιολογικές ειδήσεις 1987, Πετράς, Κρητική Εστία 2, 1988, 336—338.

² N. Παπαδάκης, Αρχαιότητες και μνημεία Ανατολικής Κρήτης, Πετράς Σητείας, Archaeologikon Deltion, 34, 1979, B2, pp. 409—410.

³ I thank Professor P. M. Warren for this information.

⁴ R. C. Bosanquet, Excavations at Petras, B. S. A. 8, 1901, pp. 282—285.

6. LMI architectural remains on several areas of the north, east and west slopes of the hill.
7. At the lower part of the hill, on its NW side, there is a big wall, of almost Cyclopean construction, its height preserved to 2.5 m with square towers.
8. At the same area, in front of the wall, during last year's campaign, parts of another Neopalatial building, preserving a plastered basin, were unconvered.

The results of the intensive surface survey, conducted in 1986, over the whole area of the four hills, have already been mentioned above.

There follow descriptions of twenty-three 'potters' marks' and of a seal impression, found during the excavation and survey of Petras⁵.

2. Catalogue of 'potters' marks'

a. Vases (1–10)

1. Lamp. Siteia Museum no 7004 (Fig. 1, Pl. I)
Provenance: House 1, room Φ, west half, stratum 1, vase no 16, 30-7-1986. H. 0.043 m. Base diam. 0.05 m.
Small parts of the body and the spout are missing. Burnt and deteriorated surface.
Flat base. Semi-globular depressed body. In-curving rim. Coarse brown-reddish clay, with impurities. Brown slip. Traces of brown-orange paint. On underside of base a composite incised mark, combined several straight lines in different directions.
Date: LM I.

For shape cf. J. Deshayes, A. Dessène, *Fouilles exécutées à Mallia, Exploration des maisons et quartiers d'habitation (1948–1954) II*, Et. Crét. 11, Paris 1959, pl. XII, no 3, LM I. Also, D. G. Hogarth, *Excavations at Zakro, Crete*, B. S. A. 7, 1900–1901, 128, fig. 41; L. Mercando, *Lampade, lucerne, bracieri di Festós*, Scavi 1950–1970, *Annuario* 52–53, N. S. 36–37, 1974–1975, 78, fig. 67, no 85. No exact parallel for the mark is known to us, even though combinations of straight lines are not uncommon on bases of vessels. Cf. for ex. H. Döhl, *Bronzezeitliche Graffiti aus Tiryns*, 1. Vor dem Brand eingeritzte Zeichen, *Kadmos* 17, 1978, 140, no 72, fig. 5, pl. 1.

⁵ These twenty-four examples constitute by no means the totality of marked clay objects from the site. Only the pottery from the survey has been studied in its whole. A large part of the ceramic material from the excavation is not cleaned nor mended yet.

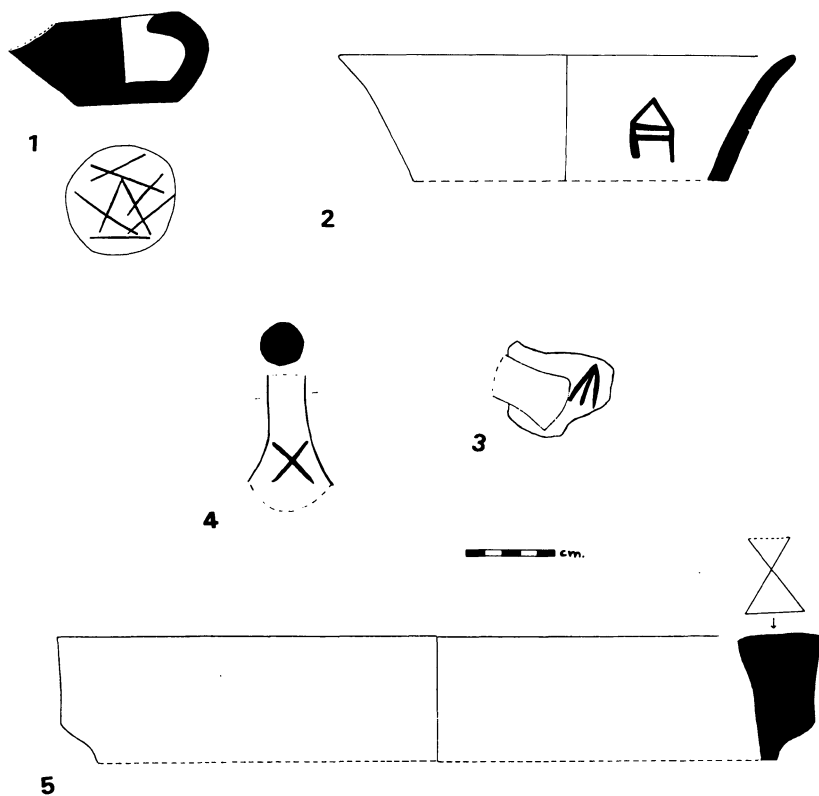


Fig. 1. Petras, Siteia: Sherds bearing incised marks.

2. Rim and body fragment from a kalathos. Siteia Museum no 6795 (Fig. 1, Pl. I).

Provenance: House 1, room Φ, stratum 1, SF. 310, 28-7-1986.

Dimensions: 0.072 × 0.079 × 0.007 m.

Burnt surface. Flaring profile. Conical body. Coarse brown-orange clay, with brown-yellowish surface. Buff-yellowish slip. On the inside incised mark: A Π with an horizontal line on its upper part, topped by a triangle.

Date: LM I.

For shape cf. J. L. Davis, *Keos V*, Ayia Irini, Period V, Mainz on Rhine 1986, pl. 61, AA 55, pp. 57, 86. The mark is somewhat similar to a variation of the linear A sign L 44, known from Zakros, cf. N. Πλάτων, W. C. Brice, *Ενεπίγραφοι πινακίδες και πήθι γράμμικου συστήματος Α' εκ Ζάκρου*, Αθήναι 1975, 12 a 7.

3. Body fragment from an open domestic vessel. Siteia Museum no 6799 (Fig. 1, Pl. I).

Provenance: House 1, room Λ, stratum 2, SF. 327, 29-7-1986.

Dimensions: $0.046 \times 0.047 \times 0.008$ m.

It preserves attachment of an horizontal handle. Coarse brown-reddish clay, with many impurities. Brown-reddish slip. Incised mark at handle attachment: an arrow.

Date: LM I.

One cannot be certain about the shape. The fabric indicates a tripod cooking-pot. For the mark cf. a protopalatial example from Malia, J. C. Poursat, L. Godart, J. P. Olivier, *Fouilles exécutées à Mallia, Le Quartier Mu, Introduction générale, Ecriture hiéroglyphique crétoise, Et. crét.* 23, Paris 1978, 122–123, no 89, P 13.

4. Handle fragment from a coarse domestic vessel. Siteia Museum no 6690/8 (Fig. 1).

Provenance: Surface survey, Hill I, field 2, higher plateau, 8-7-1986.

Dimensions: $0.07 \times 0.035 \times 0.021$ m.

Horizontal. Circular section. Coarse dark brown clay with many impurities and grey core. Brown slip. Near the attachment incised mark: X.

Date: LM I.

The sherd comes from a large pithoid or bridge-spouted jar. The mark is quite common at Malia during the Protopalatial period, cf. J. C. Poursat, L. Godart, J. P. Olivier, o. c. 161–164. For similar marks contemporary with ours cf. A. Halepa-Bikaki, *Keos IV, Ayia Irini: The Potters' Marks*, Mainz on Rhine 1984, 27, pl. 23, VI-4, VI-5, VI-6.

5. Rim fragment from a pithos. Siteia Museum no 6627/2 (Fig. 1, Pl. I).

Provenance: Surface survey, Hill I, field 7, NE. slope, 16-7-1986.

Dimensions: $0.06 \times 0.047 \times 0.043$ m.

Rectangular section. Chipped at one end. Coarse buff clay, with many impurities. Black paint. Monochrome outside. On upper surface incised mark: X with an horizontal line at one end.

Date: LM I.

For shape cf. H. W. Catling et al., *Knossos 1975, Middle Minoan III and Late Minoan I Houses by the Acropolis*, B. S. A. 74, 1979, fig. 39, V. 267, p. 56. Part of the mark is missing. It could be restored either as a stemless double axe, or as the Linear A sign L 81b. Cf. A. Halepa-Bikaki, o. c. pl. 10, V-2, V-3, VII-5, pp. 23, 33. For an identical sign on an identical pithos rim, F. Chapouthier, *Les écritures minoennes au Palais de Mallia, Et. crét.* 2, Paris 1930, fig. 31.

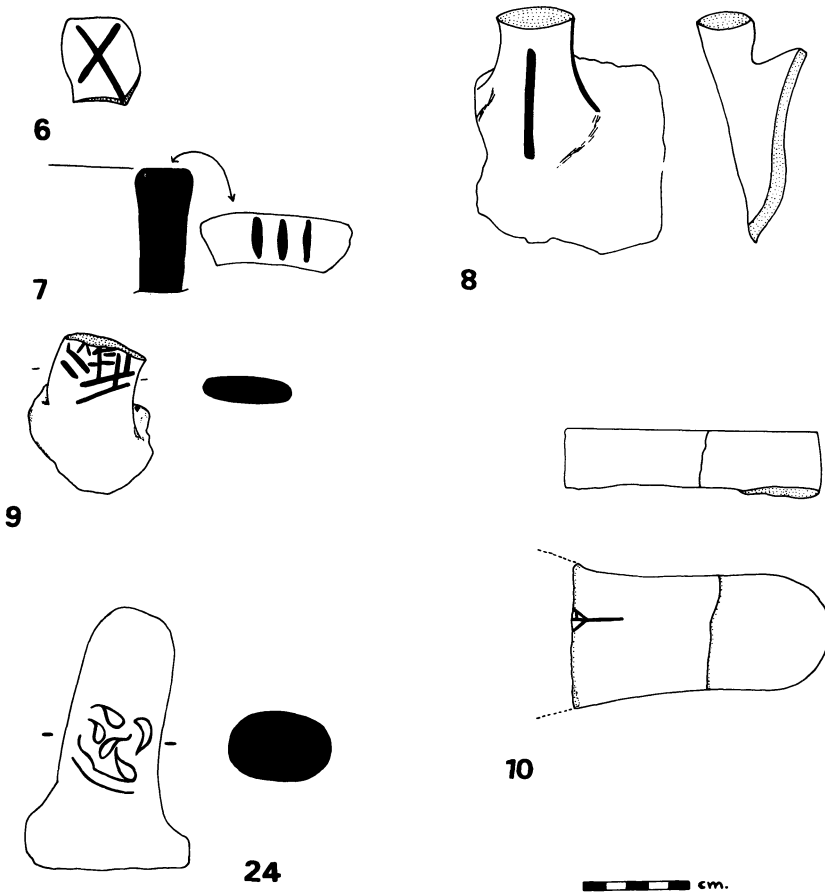


Fig. 2. Petras, Siteia: Sherds bearing incised marks.

6. Base fragment. Siteia Museum no 7090/4 (Fig. 2).
Provenance: Surface survey, Hill II, field 4, Top of the hill, 14-7-1986.
Dimensions: $0.036 \times 0.033 \times 0.011$ m.
Coarse brown-reddish clay. Brown-reddish slip. On underside incised mark: X.
Date: LM III(?).

The sherd is very much eroded. It could come either from a close or an open vessel. It was found at the LM III site, and is probably dated to this phase.

7. Rim fragment from a pithos. Siteia Museum, unnumbered (Fig. 2).
Provenance: Area of the pithos magazines, trench θ , staircase, 5-8-1988.

Estimated rim diam.: 0.34 m. Width: 0.07 m. Pres. height: 0.057 m. Thickness: 0.026 m.

Vertical. Rectangular section. Coarse red clay. No slip. On upper surface incised mark: three vertical strokes.

Date: LM I.

The sherd probably comes from a pithos similar to H. W. Catling et al. o.c. fig. 33, V 228, LM Ia. Simple lines or strokes are quite common as potters' marks. Cf. for three lines on Protopalatial vases, J. C. Poursat, L. Godart, J. P. Olivier, o.c. p. 198, nos 297, 298, and on Neopalatial ones, A. Halepa-Bikaki, o.c. pl. 23, VI-13, VI-11, VI-14, p. 28.

8. Body and handle fragment from a large coarse vessel. Siteia Museum, unnumbered (Fig. 2).

Provenance: Area of the pithos magazines, trench θ , staircase, 5-8-1988.

Dimensions: $0.087 \times 0.105 \times 0.008$ m.

Vertical. Elliptical section. Coarse orange clay with many impurities. Orange slip. On lower part incised mark: vertical stroke.

Date: LM I.

The sherd comes probably from an amphora. Cf. L. H. Sackett, M. R. Popham, Excavations at Palaikastro VII, B. S. A. 65, 1970, fig. 14, NP 28, NP 111, NP 140. For the mark cf. J. C. Poursat, L. Godart, J. P. Olivier, o.c. pp. 178-180, nos 241-247.

9. Handle fragment from a pithoid jar. Siteia Museum, unnumbered (Fig. 2).

Provenance: Higher plateau, trench A2, surface stratum, SF. 38, 11-7-1988.

Dimensions: $0.059 \times 0.055 \times 0.033$ m.

Vertical. Elliptical section. Coarse orange clay with grey core. No slip.

Incised mark: a combination of straight lines.

Date: LM I.

10. Fragment of a grid. Siteia Museum, unnumbered (Fig. 2).

Provenance: Higher plateau, trench B1, stratum 1, SF. 5, 7-7-1988.

Dimensions: $0.12 \times 0.062 \times 0.03$ m.

Elongated shape, broken at both ends. Coarse red clay. Reddish slip. On upper surface at broken end incised mark: one horizontal, two oblique lines and one vertical.

Date: LM I.

Cf. for shape, R. C. Bosanquet, R. M. Dawkins, *The Unpublished Objects from the Palaikastro Excavations*, London 1923, p. 73, fig. 58c. Also, C. W. Blegen, *Prosymna*, Cambridge 1937, fig. 156, no 421.

b. 'Loom-Weights' (11–23)

i. Cube or parallelepiped-shaped with four holes (11–19)

11. Cube-shaped. Siteia Museum no 5161 (Fig. 3).

Provenance: House 1, trench θ, surface stratum, SF. 50, 2-7-1985.

Dimensions: 0.05 × 0.053 × 0.054 m.

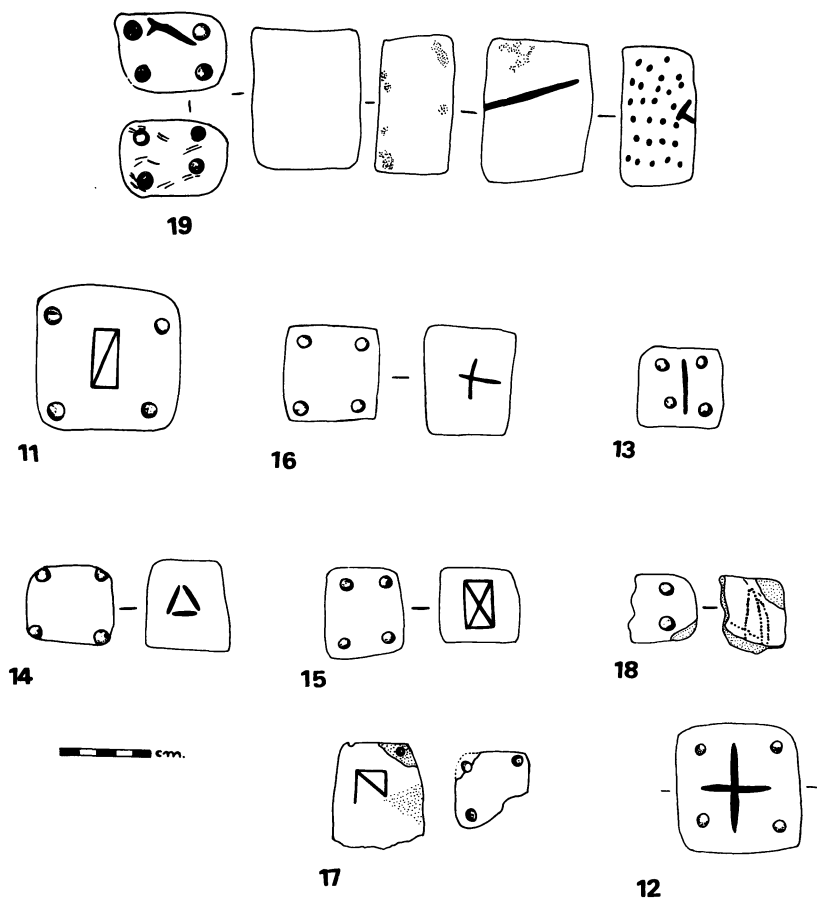


Fig. 3. Petras, Siteia: Clay weights bearing incised marks.

Intact. Coarse brown-reddish clay. Brown slip. On one surface, between the holes, incised mark: Rectangle with one diagonal.
Date: LM I.

12. Cube-shaped. Siteia Museum no 6444 (Fig. 3, Pl. II).
Provenance: House 1, room O, north half, stratum 1, SF. 176, 14-7-1986.
Dimensions: $0.061 \times 0.058 \times 0.058$ m.
Chipped at two ends. Coarse dark orange clay with many impurities. Orange slip. On one surface, between the holes, incised mark: Cross.
Cf. a similar weight with a cross from Zakros, D. G. Hogarth, o. c. fig. 38, no 1. Linear A sign L 22.
13. Cube-shaped. Siteia Museum no 6426 (Fig. 3).
Provenance: House 1, room Λ, stratum 2, SF. 371, 31-7-1986.
Dimensions: $0.044 \times 0.042 \times 0.044$ m.
Chipped on one side. Coarse reddish clay. No slip. On one surface, between the holes, incised mark: vertical line.
Date: LM I.
Cf. for the mark, J. C. Poursat, L. Godart, J. P. Olivier, o. c. pp. 178–180, nos 241–247.
14. Parallelepiped-shaped. Siteia Museum no 6427 (Fig. 3).
Provenance: House 1, room Λ, stratum 2, SF. 343, 29-7-1986.
Dimensions: $0.045 \times 0.059 \times 0.046$ m.
Chipped on one side. On base slightly smaller than the other one. Coarse orange clay. On one long surface incised mark: triangle open at angles.
Date: LM I.
15. Parallelepiped-shaped. Siteia Museum no. 6459 (Fig. 3, Pl. II).
Provenance: House 1, room Λ, stratum 2, SF. 348, 29-7-1986.
Dimensions: $0.049 \times 0.041 \times 0.043$ m.
Intact. Coarse brown-reddish clay with many impurities. No slip. On one surface, between the holes, incised mark: X inscribed in a rectangle.
Date: LM I.
The mark is similar to the linear A sign L 43.
16. Parallelepiped-shaped. Siteia Museum no 6448 (Fig. 3).
Provenance: House 1, room Φ, surface stratum, SF. 252, 18-7-1986.
Dimensions: $0.059 \times 0.053 \times 0.049$ m.

Chipped on several edges. Coarse brown-reddish clay with many impurities. Brown-reddish slip. On one surface incised mark: cross.

For the mark cf. J. C. Poursat, L. Godart, J. P. Olivier, o. c. pp. 159–160, nos 188–191, A. Halepa-Bikaki, o. c. pl. 11, VI-3, pp. 24, 27. Linear A sign L 22.

17. Parallelepiped-shaped. Siteia Museum, unnumbered (Fig. 3).

Provenance: Higher plateau, trench B2, stratum 1, SF. 3, 7-7-1988.

Dimensions: $0.057 \times 0.05 \times 0.04$ m.

Broken. Rather coarse red clay with impurities. No slip. On one surface incised mark: a triangle and a vertical line at one end.

Date: LM I.

For the mark cf. J. C. Poursat, L. Godart, J. P. Olivier, o. c. p. 141, no. 139, but with the diagonal at the opposite direction, the ideogram for 'wine'. Cf. also, A. Halepa-Bikaki, pl. 9, V-13, p. 25, where the mark is interpreted as a single axe.

18. Parallelepiped-shaped. Siteia Museum, unnumbered (Fig. 3).

Provenance: Higher plateau, trench B1, surface stratum, SF. 2, 7-7-1988.

Dimensions: $0.04 \times 0.032 \times 0.038$ m.

Broken. Only half is preserved. Rather coarse red clay with impurities and grey core. No slip. On one surface dotted mark: A, with a vertical line in the middle.

Date: LM I.

The mark is very similar to the linear A sign L 20.

19. Parallelepiped-shaped. Siteia Museum, unnumbered (Fig. 3).

Provenance: Higher plateau, trench Γ1, stratum 1, SF. 41, 13-7-1988.

Dimensions: $0.055 \times 0.078 \times 0.045$ m.

Chipped on several surfaces. Rather coarse clay with impurities. Traces of red paint. On one surface, between the holes, incised mark: two strokes, almost at right angles. On another, long, surface, incised stroke and on a third one incised right angle and impressed dots.

Date: LM I.

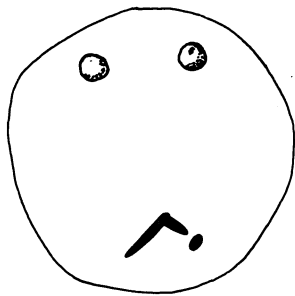
For the angles cf. J. C. Poursat, L. Godart, J. P. Olivier, o. c. pp. 166–175, nos 205–232 and A. Halepa-Bikaki, o. c. pl. 12, VII-27, VII-28, VII-29, p. 35. Linear A sign L 30. For the oblique stroke, cf. J. C. Poursat, L. Godart, J. P. Olivier, o. c. pp. 184–186, nos 259–263.

ii. Disc-shaped (20–23)

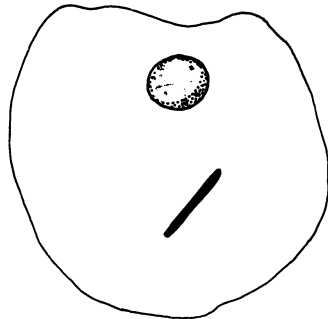
20. With two holes. Siteia Museum no 5167 (Fig. 4).

Provenance: House 1, room E, stratum 1, SF. 58, 2-7-1985.

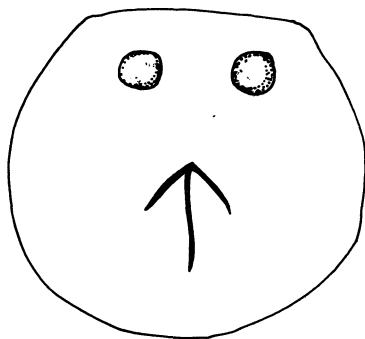
Diameter: 0.078 m. Thickness: 0.033 m.



20



22



21



23



Fig. 4. Petras, Siteia: Clay weights bearing incised marks.

Intact. Deep groove on upper end. Rather coarse buff clay with few impurities. No slip. On lower part of one flat surface incised mark: Two strokes at right angle and a dot at one end.

Date: LM I.

21. With two holes. Siteia Museum no 5142 (Fig. 4, Pl. II).

Provenance: House 1, room E, surface stratum, SF. 13, 27-6-1985.

Diameter: 0.078 m. Thickness: 0.021 m.

Chipped surface. Flat on upper end. Coarse buff clay with impurities. No slip. On one flat surface incised mark: Arrow.

Date: LM I.

For the mark cf. o. c. p. 122, no 88, hieroglyphic sign P 13, linear A sign L 67.

22. With one hole. Siteia Museum no 6359 (Fig. 4).
Provenance: House 1, room Ξ, stratum 1, SF. 24, 4-7-1986.
Diameter: 0.098 m. Thickness: 0.019 m.
Chipped on upper end. Coarse buff clay with few impurities. On one flat surface incised mark: oblique stroke.
Date: LM I.
23. With one hole. Siteia Museum no 6351 (Fig. 4).
Provenance: House 1, room Λ, stratum 1, SF. 69, 8-7-1986.
Dimensions: 0.04 × 0.04 × 0.01 m.
Only the upper part is preserved. Coarse buff clay with impurities. Buff slip. Incised mark: two strokes forming a right angle.
Date: LM I.
For the mark cf. o. c. p. 169, no 218.

c. Seal impression (24)

24. Handle from a cup. Siteia Museum, unnumbered (Fig. 2, Pl. II).
Provenance: Higher plateau, trench B1, stratum 1, 10-7-1988.
Dimensions: 0.07 × 0.105 × 0.04 m.
Vertical. Circular section. It preserves rim attachment. Coarse buff-pinkish clay with impurities. It bears a seal impression of diam. 0.025 m, with five elliptical motifs in a circular arrangement.
Date: EM III—MM I⁶.

The sherd comes probably from a cup similar to S. Xanthoudides, *The Vaulted Tombs of Mesara*, London 1924, pl. XXXVI, no. 5100, p. 61. The impression could come from an ivory rather than from a stone seal, because it is not very deep. O. c. pl. XIII, no. 1051, p. 113. For a somewhat similar but simpler and also a little later motif cf. N. Platon, I. Pini, G. Salies, CMS, *Iraklion Arch. Mus. 2* (Altpalastzeit), Berlin 1977, p. 325, no. 233, and also, J. C. Poursat, L. Godart, J. P. Olivier, o. c. p. 97, pl. XIX, no. 43.

3. Discussion

'Potters' marks' were found in every excavated area of Petras. As already pointed out⁷, in addition to the twenty-three marks presented

⁶ In the clay used in the Neopalatial walls of this area many Prepalatial sherds were found, coming from the destruction of earlier buildings.

⁷ See note 5.

here, more may come to light as the cleaning and the study of the pottery from the excavation proceeds.

Three marked sherds come from the surface survey: the first (no. 4 in the catalogue) from the higher plateau of Hill I, whose excavation in 1988 revealed more 'potters' marks' (nos 9, 10, 17, 18, 19); the second (no 5) from an area with a surprisingly high concentration of sherds, including wasters⁸, probably from a nearby pottery workshop. Even though this slope of Hill I is not easily accessible by the existing paths, we hope to be able soon to carry out there archaeological as well as a geological research. The third marked sherd from the survey came from the top of Hill II, where a LM III site was located.

It should be noted that the excavation at Petras has not, as yet, proceeded systematically below the Neopalatial level, and it cannot be excused that more 'potters' marks', dated to the EM and MM phases, will be found in the future.

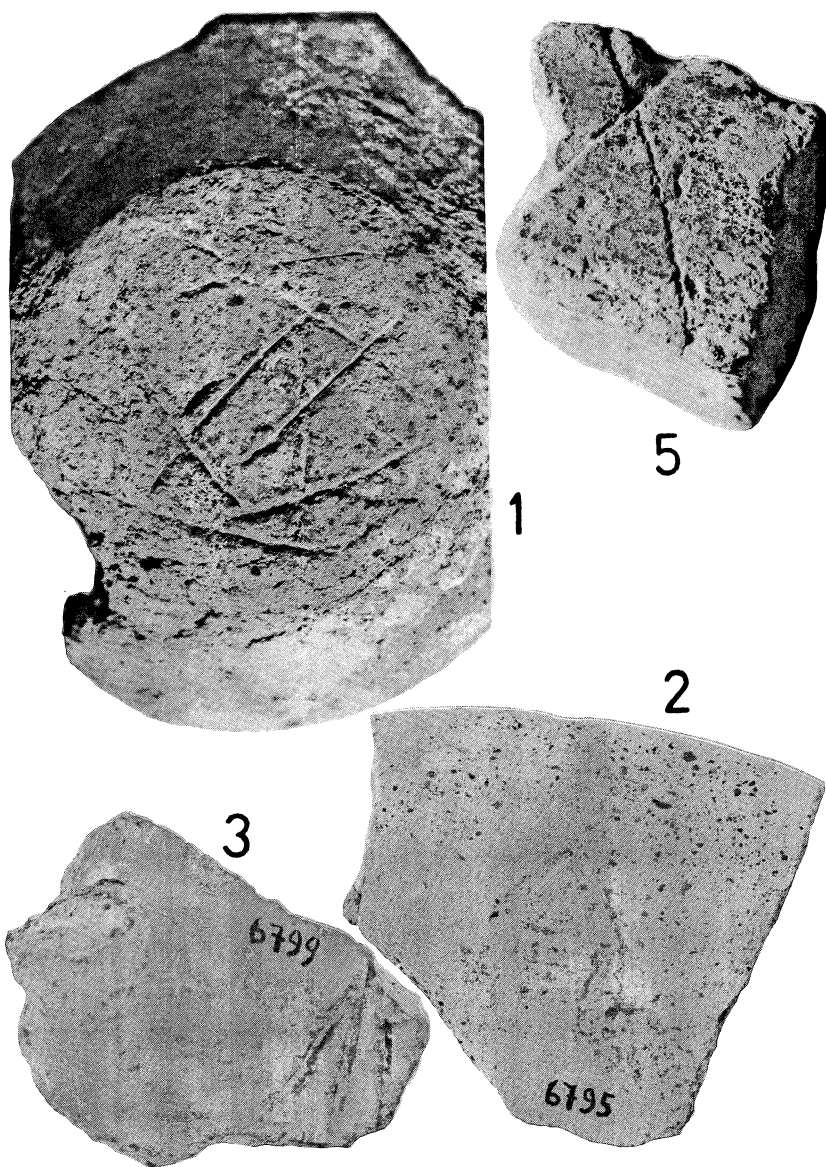
Our twenty-three marks were all incised before the firing of the vases or the 'loom-weights' on which they occur. The incision is usually deep and made by a pointed tool, whose direction is easy to define. On one occasion only, a different technique is observed (no 18 where the mark is dotted and not incised). Another 'loom-weight' has one surface entirely covered by deeply impressed dots (no 19).

The marked objects fall into two categories: vessels (including the grid), and 'loom weights'.

- a) Vessels: Ten examples. The marks are found on handles (4), rims (3) the underside of the base (2) and the interior surface (1). With two exceptions (nos 1 and 6), they were intended to be visible during the use of the vases. On the other hand, since there is only one complete marked vase (no. 1), one cannot be sure whether the vessels to which our sherds belonged had initially more than one mark. The incised signs of this group are generally simple, with two exceptions (nos 1 and 9). There the combination of lines almost gives the impression of an — unsuccessful — imitation of a Linear A inscription.

As for relations with signs of the Cretan scripts, three of our marks (2, 3, 5) of this group are similar or identical to Linear A signs.

⁸ From an area of 200 square meters, 136 bags of Neopalatial sherds were collected, even though, following the strategy of the survey, 30% of the ceramic material was left in situ. R. C. Bosanquet, o.c. thought that this amount of pottery has been thrown there after extensive cleaning operations, during a period of rebuilding at the settlement.



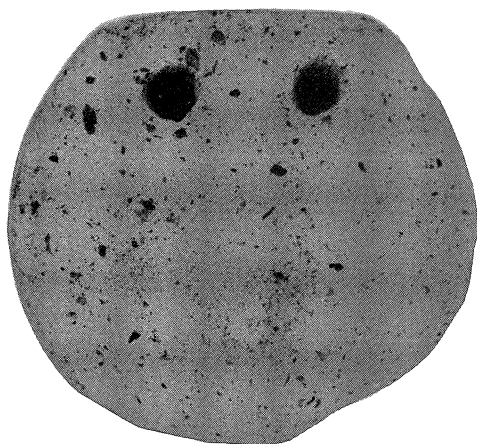
Pl. I. 'Potters' marks' on vases, Petras.



12



15



21



24

Pl. II. Marks on 'loom-weights' (12, 15, 21), and seal-impression on cup handle (24), Petras.

This similarity might be either intentional or accidental. The vessels, with one exception (Pithos no 5) are made of a coarse brown-reddish clay of the kind used for the domestic wares in the area. Even though the marked sherds have not been analysed, either chemically or petrographically, they are all probably local. The shapes represented are a kalathos, one or two pithoid jars, probably one cooking-pot, an amphora and three pithoi.

- b) 'Loom-weights'. At Petras these are of two different shapes: cubic or parallelepiped-shaped with four holes; and disc-shaped with either two holes or one. Both types are fairly common in Minoan excavations, at least since the beginning of the MM period⁹. It is not certain whether they served the same purpose, even though both types are usually called loom-weights by the excavators. C. Davaras discussed this matter and suggested that the first shape might rather have been used as 'net-weights'; but he also accepts the possibility of alternative uses for the same object¹⁰.

We have to admit that the excavation at Petras does not offer arguments in favour of either of the supposed uses. It is, of course, a coastal settlement and fishing was doubtless one of the occupations of the inhabitants. Nevertheless, no objects connected with sea-activities, such as fish-hooks, have as yet been found there¹¹, nor were there any fish-bones among the bone material. On the other hand, the erosion observed on some of our weights could have been caused by friction in the sea. Nowhere in the excavated area was found any large concentration of clay weights, as from a loom.

At Petras there is a slight preference for the first type. As far as the marked examples are concerned, this is represented by eleven exam-

⁹ Cf. for example, D.G. Hogarth, *Excavations at Zakro, Crete*, B.S.A. VII, 1900–1901, pp. 127–129, figs. 38, 39, 40, F. Chapouthier, R. Joly, *Fouilles exécutées à Mallia, Deuxième rapport, Exploration du Palais*, (1925–1926) Et. cré. 4, Paris 1936, p. 37, pl. XVIII g–l, L. H. Sackett, M. R. Popham, *Excavations at Palaikastro VII*, B.S.A. 65, 1970, 304–305, fig. 19, R. W. Hutchinson, *Unpublished Objects from Palaikastro and Praesos*, B.S.A. 40, 1939–1940, p. 49, fig. 41, J. L. Davis, *Keos V, Ayia Irini: Period V*, Mainz on Rhine 1986, p. 98, pl. 38, e, J. N. Coldstream, G. L. Huxley (eds.) *Kythera, Excavations and Studies conducted by the University of Pennsylvania Museum and the British School at Athens*, London 1972, pp. 217–218, fig. 59, ε 110, 60, ν 65, 61, ω 373, ω 374a.

¹⁰ P. A. E. 1977, p. 493.

¹¹ With one exception, a stone anchor, whose weight makes dubious an actual use in the sea; see M. Τσιμποπούλου, *Μινωική άγκυρά από τον Πετρά Σητείας*, *Archaiologiki Ephimeris* (in press).

ples (and ten marks), while the second type appears in four examples (and four marks). These numbers are ca. 15% of the total of clay weights from the site. Only in one case (no 19) are more marks than one found on the same weight. The clay used for the first type is brown-reddish, and, for the second, buff. The excavators of Palaikastro also observed a difference in the fabric linked to the shape: there, the disc-shaped loom-weights were made of a coarse reddish clay, while for the cubic or parallelepiped-shaped weights a finer clay was used, and these were often painted¹².

Six of the marks found on loom-weights at Petras are identifiable with Linear A signs. The only mark found both on vases and on loom-weights is the vertical line or stroke. Whether this difference is connected with the possible interpretation of the marks, and of their purpose, cannot be certain.

The term 'potters' marks' is used here in a conventional way. Indeed the limited number of the marked clay objects from Petras and of the marks themselves does not help towards an interpretation. It cannot be excluded that the signs had more than one meaning and that they were used to serve different purposes¹³. We note, however, that, even though vessels and clay weights are both made locally in the same fabric, the marks used in the two groups are quite different. This may suggest that the so-called 'potters' marks' were not intended to identify the potter, but rather the owner. Possibly too the marks may have specified the use of a particular object, the content of a vessel, or the area of the settlement or building with which they were connected.

¹² L. H. Sackett, M. R. Popham, *o. c.*

¹³ see A. Halepa-Bikaki, Keos IV, Ayia Irini, *The Potters' Marks*, Mainz on Rhine 1984, pp. 1–2.