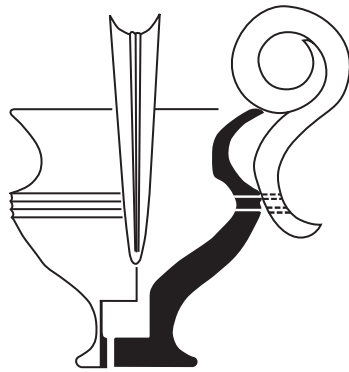
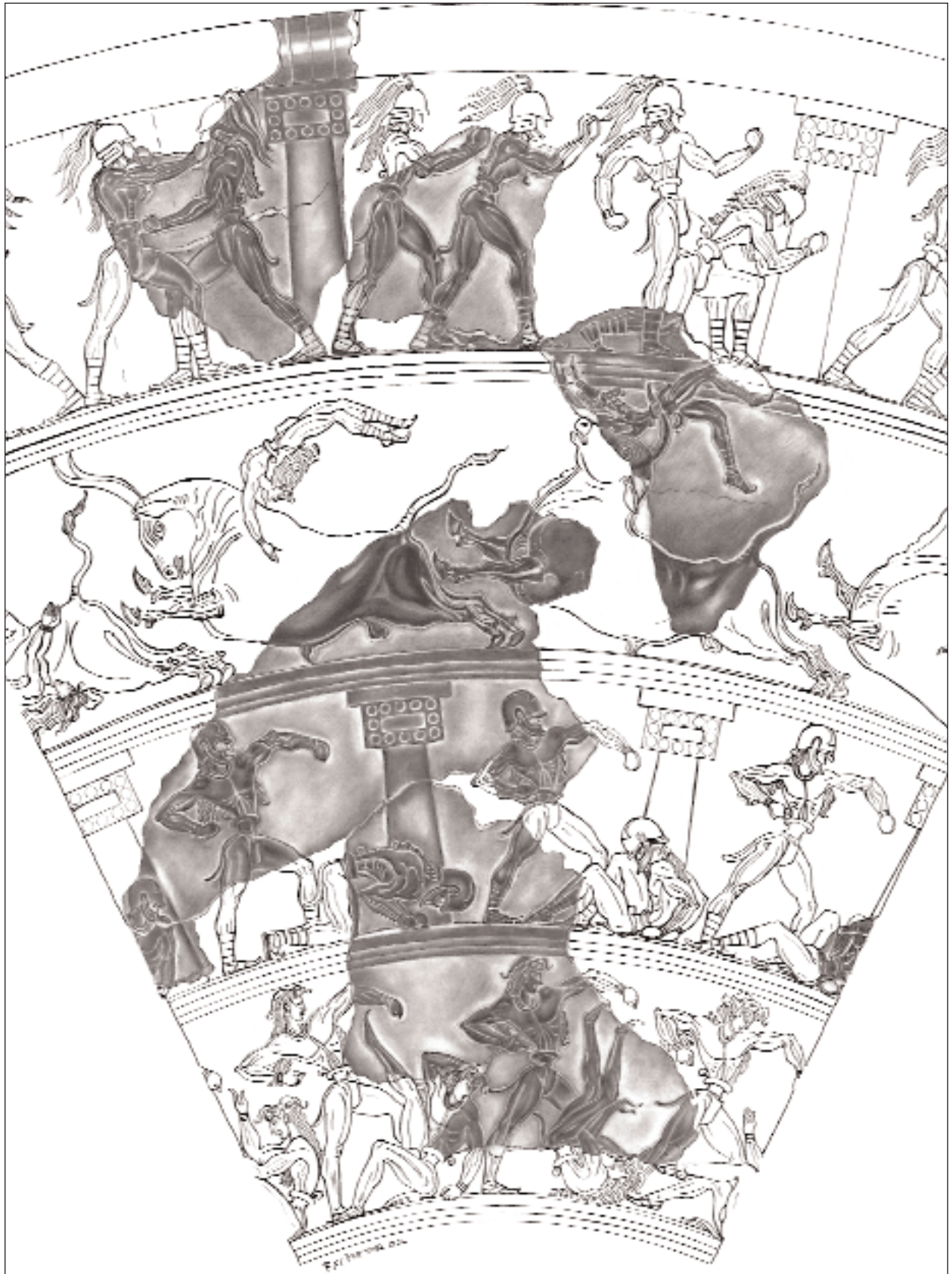


Aegean Bronze Age Rhyta





Type III S Conical, Boxer Rhyton (651). Reconstruction drawing by R. Porter (see also Fig. 29).

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Aegean Bronze Age Rhyta

by

Robert B. Koehl



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*In honor of my mother, Ruth
and
to the memory of my father, Seymour*

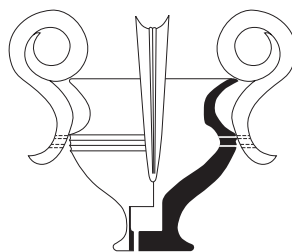
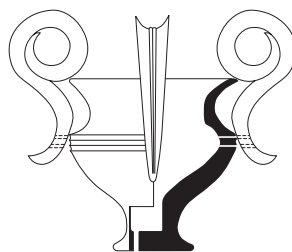


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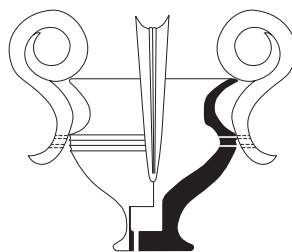
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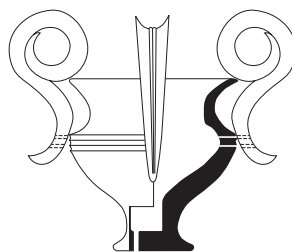
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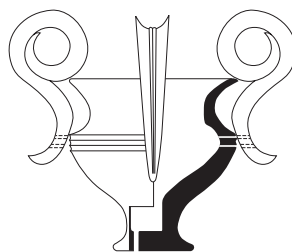
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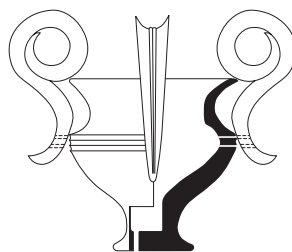


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Preface

Anyone who has had any exposure to the cultures of the Aegean Bronze Age will surely have seen illustrations of rhyta, if not the actual objects themselves, many of which are on prominent display in museums throughout Greece, elsewhere in Europe, and the United States. My own introduction to rhyta came in the fall semester of my freshman year at Pomona College during Professor Harry J. Carroll Jr.'s memorable course in Greek Art and Archaeology. I recall asking Professor Carroll if I might write a term paper on Minoan rhyta. He replied that it was a rather large and complex topic, but, indeed (one of his favorite words), would be suitable for research in graduate school. In retrospect, I think Professor Carroll was hoping to steer me away from the Bronze Age and toward the more mainstream world of Classical Greece. Nonetheless, it was Harry Carroll who first kindled my curiosity.

My first chance to handle and study Aegean rhyta came in 1977 when I wrote a paper on the conical rhyta from Gournia housed in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology for Philip Betancourt's seminar on the Aegean Late Bronze Age. From the moment I expressed an interest in the subject, Professor Betancourt has remained an enthusiastic supporter of my work. I am especially grateful to him, and to J. and M. Shaw, for inviting me to Kommos during the 1979 and 1980 seasons to work as the pottery assistant to P. Betancourt and L.V. Watrous. During the 1979 season, one of the most important deposits of rhyta yet known was discovered, providing me the opportunity to study them from several points of view. That same summer, on a visit to Kommos from Knossos, P. Warren told the entire assembled Kommos staff that he had just discovered, along with a deposit of children's bones with peculiar cut marks, a large group of vessels all of which had holes in their bottoms, including miniature pithos-shaped vases, basket-shaped vases, and a large number of cup-shaped vessels. I offered that these sounded like rhyta and Warren generously invited me to examine them. The following weekend, a group of us from Kommos went up to Knossos, and I had the chance to spend a few memorable hours with this extraordinary assemblage. Since then, Professor Warren has shown himself to be a generous and interested colleague on any number of occasions.

When the time came for me to select a dissertation topic, Professor Betancourt heartily endorsed my choice of Aegean rhyta. From the outset, I was determined to understand everything I could about these vessels and began to conceive of my study from various points of view. When I broached the topic with Professor Spyros Iakovidis, my dissertation supervisor, I recall him saying that, while I might

establish how rhyta worked, what he wanted to know was when and why they were used! Knowing full well that the Bronze Age lacks the kinds of information that would provide those answers, especially texts, I thought this was an example of Professor Iakovidis' legendary wit. Still, those questions dogged me through years of research on the topic, and I only hope that some of the suggestions offered here prove worthy of his consideration.

Through the generosity of two consecutive fellowships from the Fulbright Foundation from 1979–1981, I was able to conduct most of the research for this study in Athens as an Associate Member of the American School of Classical Studies. At that time, the wife of the school's director was S. Immerwahr, a renowned scholar of the Aegean Bronze Age, who had already published a book on the Mycenaean graves in the Athenian Agora (Immerwahr 1971) and an important article on a unique rhyton from Hagia Eirene (Immerwahr 1977). Professor Immerwahr became a second mentor who willingly answered my questions and shared her wisdom, even while she was in the throes of writing her masterful study of Aegean Bronze Age wall painting (Immerwahr 1990).

At the same time that I began my study of rhyta, I was also preparing for publication the imported Bronze and Iron Age Aegean and Cypriot ceramics from Sarepta (Lebanon). By 1980, my manuscript on the pottery from Sarepta had grown into a monograph while my study on rhyta had not progressed beyond a stack of catalog cards, photographs, and drawings. On the advice of several friends and colleagues, notably T. Palaima, J. Uhlenbrock, and M. Dabney, I changed the topic of my dissertation and was awarded a doctorate for my study of the Sarepta imports (subsequently, Koehl 1985).

Although I was still far from writing a manuscript on rhyta, in the course of accumulating the catalog, I developed a preliminary classification. At the same time, I began noticing distribution patterns, based on a cursory examination of find contexts that led me to begin formulating hypotheses regarding the roles played by rhyta in Aegean society. The opportunity to present these ideas—which were still incubating—to an audience of specialists in Aegean Bronze Age cult and ritual came serendipitously when I met Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg (then Director of the Swedish Institute in Athens) in the fall of 1979 at an event they were hosting for students of the foreign archaeological schools in Athens. After Nanno asked me what I was studying, and I replied Aegean rhyta, she and Robin invited me on the spot to deliver a paper at the First International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens on the topic of “Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age” to be held that spring (May 12–13, 1980). Ever since that meeting, it has been my privilege to regard both of them as friends. Although the typology I published in the proceedings (Koehl 1981, fig. 1) is superseded by the present one, other observations first presented there seem thus far to have stood the test of time.

The opportunity to further develop my ideas on the roles played by rhyta in Aegean Bronze Age society came at the invitation of C. Doumas, Y. Sakellarakis, and P. Warren, the organizers of the Third International Congress on “Thera and the Aegean World” in September 1989. I presented a paper on the find contexts and associated archaeological assemblages of the rhyta from Akrotiri and made suggestions regarding their various roles in that community (Koehl 1990).

By that point, I believed that the weakest part of my study was the typology, which was still basically a descriptive categorization. It lacked an underlying structure or principle. During the academic break of January 1994, I once again

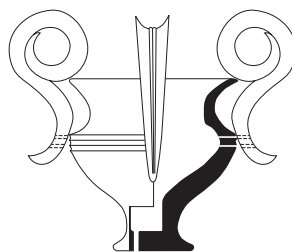
laid out my index cards by categories and, as often happens, in a matter of minutes I understood the structural principles that led me to the present typology (Introduction). Over the course of the next two years, I reorganized, renumbered, and rewrote the catalog (Chapter 2), and I began writing the shape studies that form the basis of Chapter 1. I submitted a manuscript to the monograph series of the Archaeological Institute of America in 1996, which was accepted with revisions. I wish to express my thanks to the three readers for the monograph series, J. Rutter, the late P. Rehak, and one who remains anonymous, for their extremely constructive criticisms. I put the manuscript aside for a year until receiving a sabbatical leave from Hunter College in the fall of 1997, which I spent mostly on Crete at the Knossos “Taverna” as a student of the British School of Archaeology at Athens thanks to the kind invitation of C. Macdonald, then Curator of the Stratigraphical Museum. During that glorious period, surrounded by great friends and colleagues, I reconceived part of the study and began writing the present Chapters 4 and 5.

The following fall, at the request of my dear friend, Alexandra Karetsou, I published a study of the Aegean rhyta in Egypt, and for the first time, I published an outline of my revised typology. This appeared in the volume of essays that accompanied the exhibition in the Herakleion Archaeological Museum, “Three Millennia of Cultural Connections between Crete and Egypt,” organized during her eminent tenure as director of that museum (Koehl 2000, 94–95, fig. 1).

The present manuscript was resubmitted largely in its present state to the Archaeological Institute of America in 2002. The manuscript greatly benefited from suggestions given by P. Betancourt before resubmission to the Institute. On account of the sudden departure of the editor and production editor of AIA in July 2004, the executive director released me from contractual obligations, and I was able to reach an agreement with INSTAP Academic Press to publish the volume instead.

While it is my hope that this book will prove to be of some use, I also hope that it is not regarded as the final word on the subject, but rather, as a springboard to further studies. Indeed, scholarship should stimulate further inquiry, not stifle it. New avenues of research, such as organic residue analyses, may soon answer questions about which the present study could only speculate. Furthermore, part of the thrill of archaeology is the potential it holds for continued and unexpected discoveries; a single find can overturn decades of research. However, what is unknown need not concern us when the evidence from the present is so very inviting.

Robert B. Koehl
New York City, NY, 2005



Acknowledgments

In the course of this study, I was very fortunate to have received the help of numerous friends and colleagues, without whose unselfish efforts on my behalf this monograph could never have been written.

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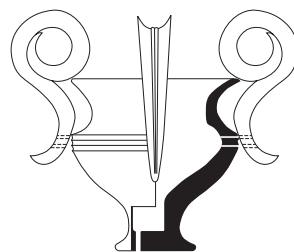
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Unless otherwise credited, the author accepts full responsibility for all ideas and errors expressed in this book.

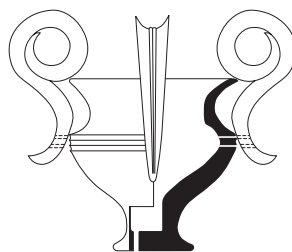


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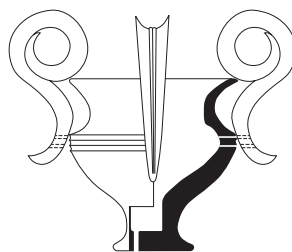


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Abbreviations and Conventions

Chronology

EC	Early Cycladic	LC	Late Cycladic	MM	Middle Minoan
EH	Early Helladic	LH	Late Helladic	SIP	Second Intermediate Period
EM	Early Minoan	LM	Late Minoan		

Catalog Entries

b	bronze	fig.	figure	no.	number
c	ceramic	g	gold	o	ostrich eggshell
cm.	centimeter	h.	height	p.	page
d.	diameter	i	ivory	pl.	plate
dim.	dimension	int.	interior	pr.	preserved
Dyn.	Dynasty	l.	length	rest.	restored
e	electrum	m.	meter(s)	s	silver
est.	estimated	max.	maximum	st	stone (specific types are identified in the catalog entries)
ext.	exterior	n.	footnote	w.	width
f	faience	nn.	footnotes		

Bibliography

- GORILA Godart, L., and J.-P. Olivier. 1976–1985. *Recueil des inscriptions en linéaire A (ÉtCrét 21, 1–5)*, Paris.
- FM Furumark Motif as described and numbered in Furumark 1941a, 237–424.
- FS Furumark Shape as described and numbered in Furumark 1941a, 585–643.
- WM Walberg Motif as described and numbered in Walberg 1976, 47–75.
- WS Walberg Shape as described and numbered in Walberg 1976, 129–156.

Museums and Institutions

The following abbreviations appear in the catalog entries in Chapter 2. They are listed in Concordance I under the city in which the museum is located.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| AE | Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, UK |
| Agora M. | Agora Museum, Athens |
| Arch. | Archaeological |
| Berlin, Pergamon M. | Staatliche Museen: Antikensammlung in Pergamonmuseum, Berlin |
| BM | British Museum, London |
| BMFA | Boston Museum of Fine Arts |
| Bonn. Arch. Instit. | Archäologisches Institut der Universität, Bonn |
| British School in Athens | British School of Archaeology, Athens |
| Chora, Triphylia Arch. M. | Triphylia (Chora) Archaeological Museum, Triphylia, Peloponnese, Greece |
| Cyprus M. | Cyprus Museum, Nicosia |
| Fitzwilliam M. | Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK |
| HM | Herakleion Archaeological Museum, Crete |
| HNM | Hagios Nikolaos Archaeological Museum, Crete |
| INSTAP-SCEC PS/P | INSTAP Study Center for East Crete, Pseira Excavations, Pacheia Ammos |
| INSTAP-SCEC M/P | INSTAP Study Center for East Crete, Mochlos Excavations, Pacheia Ammos |
| KSM | Knossos Stratigraphical Museum, Crete |
| Louvre | Musée du Louvre, Paris |
| M. | Museum |
| M. of Classical Arch. | Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, UK |

M. of Prehistoric Thera	Museum of Prehistoric Thera, Thera, Greece
MMNY	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
MS	Mediterranean Section, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia
MSM	Malia Stratigraphical Museum, Crete
MUM	Minoan Unexplored Mansion, Knossos, Crete
NAM	National Archaeological Museum, Athens
NSC	Nauplion, Study Collection, Greece
PAM	Rockefeller Museum (Palestine Archaeological Museum), Jerusalem
Pigorini M.	Pigorini Museum, Rome
PSM	Phaistos Stratigraphic Museum, Crete
ROM	Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
SM	Siteia Archaeological Museum, Crete
SME	Stratigraphical Museum Extension, Knossos, Crete
Staatliche Antik. M.	Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich
Thera AKR	Akrotiri Excavation Storeroom, Thera, Greece

APPROXIMATE ABSOLUTE DATE (B.C.)	CRETE	GREEK MAINLAND	AEGEAN ISLANDS	EGYPT	WESTERN ASIA	CYPRUS
2500–1950	EM II–MM IA (Prepalatial)					
1950–1750	MM IB and MM IIA–IIB (Protopalatial)			12th–14th Dynasty		
1750–1625	MM IIIA–B (Early Neopalatial)			15th–early 16th/17th Dynasty (SIP or Hyksos era)		
1625–1525	Transitional MM IIIB/LM IA–LM IA (Middle Neopalatial)	LH I (Early Mycenaean I)	LC I	Late 16th/17th Dynasty (SIP or Hyksos era)–Early 18th Dynasty		Late Cypriot IA
1525–1450	LM IB (Late Neopalatial)	LH IIA (Early Mycenaean II)	LC II	Early 18th Dynasty (Thutmosid era)	LB I	Late Cypriot IB
1450–1425	LM II (Early Final Palatial)	LH IIB (Middle Mycenaean I)		Middle 18th Dynasty		Late Cypriot IIA
1425–1375	LM IIIA:1 (Middle Final Palatial)	LH IIIA:1 (Middle Mycenaean II)	LC III (early)		LB II	
1375–1325	LM IIIA:2 early (Late Final Palatial)	LH IIIA:2 early (Middle Mycenaean III)		Late 18th Dynasty (Amarna Age)		Late Cypriot IIB
1325–1200	LM IIIA:2 late–LM IIIB (Early Postpalatial)	LH IIIA:2 late–LH IIIB:1 (Late Mycenaean I) LH IIIB:2 (Late Mycenaean II)	LC III (middle)	19th Dynasty	LB III	Late Cypriot IIC
1200–1125	LM IIIC (Late Postpalatial)	LH IIIC (Postpalatial)	LC III (late)			Late Cypriot IIIA

Illustration 1. Eastern Mediterranean relative chronologies used to date Aegean Bronze Age rhyta, from their first to last occurrence.