

4. The prehistoric pottery

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Abstract. The excavations carried out by M. Murray between 1921 and 1927 in the area of the Borġ in-Nadur temple produced large amounts of pottery related to the Neolithic and the Bronze Age, thus testifying to the long life-history of this place and highlighting its importance for Maltese prehistory. Following the publication of a number of reports at the time of the excavations, and a partial inventory of the material in the 1950s, the evidence from the megalithic temple of Borġ in-Nadur was never looked at again, a fact which probably contributed towards a less than comprehensive knowledge about the Maltese Bronze Age. In 2007, eighty years after the end of the excavations, a research project was commenced, aimed at a reappraisal of all the finds coming from the temple, with particular emphasis on the Borġ in-Nadur pottery. The intention was to clarify the different phases of occupation of the site and to build a chronotypological sequence for the Borġ in-Nadur pottery production. In this contribution, the results achieved during that research exercise are presented.*

Keywords: Tarxien, Tarxien Cemetery, Borġ in-Nadur, pottery, typology.

4.1. Re-discovering the pottery found at Borġ in-Nadur

During the exploration of the megalithic temple of Borġ in-Nadur carried out by Margaret Murray in 1921-1922¹, 1923² and 1926-

* Unless stated otherwise, the drawings in this paper are by Maxine Anastasi and they are all reproduced at a scale of 1:4.

¹ Murray 1923.

² Murray 1925.

1927³ a large amount of ceramic finds spanning the periods Neolithic to the end of the Bronze Age, were recovered. Reading the preliminary reports, it is clear that the excavation was carried out following the scientific methodology of the time especially for what regards the pottery: ‘Each piece of pottery as it came out of the ground was washed, dried and marked’⁴; ‘All the fragments were collected and sent to the Valletta Museum to be cleaned and built up into their original forms’⁵; ‘The pieces have been put together at the Museum, and drawings and photographs of them are now published’⁶.

In 1952, in his overall reappraisal of all the prehistoric material held at the National Museum of Archaeology meant for a construction of a culture sequence of Maltese prehistory⁷, John D. Evans sorted and catalogued also the pottery found at Borġ in-Nadur. On that occasion he encountered many problems in locating and identifying the materials, as he stated: ‘I was not able to locate much of the other material found and published by her [Murray]’⁸.

A possible justification for those missing pieces can be in a statement made by Murray regarding pottery pieces coming from different strata to construct the site’s stratigraphy: ‘It was therefore a shock to find, when fitting the pieces of pottery together after arrival in England, that no reliance can be placed on it’⁹. This statement can be interpreted in two ways: it can mean that the restoration of the pottery was carried out in Malta after Murray had left for England or that it was done in the British Museum after the completion of the fieldwork¹⁰. The second interpretation could justify the absence of some relevant pieces when Evans embarked on his inventorying exercise and at the same time points to the possibility that cultural material from the Borġ in-Nadur temple may be found in England.

³ Murray 1929.

⁴ Murray 1923: 23.

⁵ Murray 1925: 20.

⁶ Murray 1925: 33.

⁷ Evans 1953.

⁸ Evans 1971: 17.

⁹ Murray 1923: 31.

¹⁰ Murray 1925: 34, pl. 17,3; ‘This is the vase found in the previous excavation [...] The vase is now in the British Museum’.

During his work, Evans selected all those ceramic fragments which he thought had the diagnostic features to allow him to construct his typology; he inked a new inventory code on them (from B[orġ in-] N[adur]/P[ottery]1 to BN/P311) and drew up inventory sheets, now kept in the museum archives. In these sheets, references to Murray's publications and exact areas of discovery of individual pieces are provided. It is not known in which way Murray marked the fragments after the excavations and no traces of signs previous to those made in 1952 can be observed on the pieces, with the exception of specimen BN/P58c. The Evans selection did not include all the material coming from the excavation of the 1920s, nor was it composed of exactly 311 specimens. In fact, in order to simplify the identification of shape typology, Evans divided all the materials according to shape (i.e., juglets, jars, cups, trays) and morphological characteristics (i.e., rims, bases, handles, walls). This probably facilitated the search for the main typological classes but it also made it difficult to find joining pieces and to restore fragmentary pots. In addition, pottery was divided into three main groups corresponding to separate boxes based on the chronology: 'Neolithic Pottery', 'Tarxien cemetery' and 'Borġ in-Nadur'. When fragments belonging to different vessels were considered to belong to the same typology they were given the same inventory number: in this manner, anything between 2 sherds or 60 sherds were inked with the same inventory number! In actual fact, therefore, the 311 inventory sheets of Borġ in-Nadur correspond not to 311 pieces but to 670 different sherds. Furthermore, other pieces, deemed to be less significant, were marked with the code BN/PX or BN/PY but they were not filed, while many others were not taken in consideration.

In his publication of 1971, Evans published a few pieces coming from the Borġ in-Nadur temple corresponding to the Tarxien Cemetery and Borġ in-Nadur phases. The inventory numbers in the publication, however, strangely and inexplicably do not match the description of the objects with the same number recorded on the inventory sheets.

During the time I spent in the National Museum in 2007 and 2010 studying the pottery from the megalithic temple, I was able to

locate 17 boxes in the storeroom containing the material¹¹, together with another three boxes¹² holding pieces selected in recent years by David Trump for the permanent display of the Bronze Age¹³. At times, these last objects had their original inventory number substituted with an Object Identification number, a system recently introduced by the National Museum; on other instances, the ID number was added. Besides the pieces marked with the BN/P code, many had no marking whatsoever.

To put some order to the pieces before detailed cataloguing, I decided to identify 129 unmarked pieces with the code BRG/010 (from BRG/010/1 to BRG/010/129). On consultation with the curator of the collection, I then adopted a system whereby single sherds having the same inventory number were catalogued thus: when those pieces having the same number were less than 10 I just added a letter to the existent code (for example, BN/P45a, b, etc.) but when the pieces were many, for instance over 60 as for BN/P43, I introduced an extra progressive number to the code (for example, BN/P43/1, 2 etc.). Only one example, BN/P58c, had Murray's code written in ink: '1924'. Added to this problem was the fact that it was not possible to locate 50 pieces that had been described by Evans in the inventory sheets amidst the material described as coming from the temple at Borg in-Nadur¹⁴. The task of cataloguing the entire collection, identify joining sherds located in different boxes, and provenance individual pieces was a daunting task. Matters were also complicated by the fact that a lot of the pottery was in an extremely fragmentary state, complicating the attempt at identification and the construction of a typology. The outcome of this exercise resulted in a study of 1065 sherds, of

¹¹ Boxes 197, 198, 199, 200, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217 and 335.

¹² 'Box display 1', 'Box display 2', 'Box pottery typology'.

¹³ See Sultana, this volume (chapter 12).

¹⁴ BN/P9, BN/P12, BN/P14, BN/P15, BN/P16, BN/P19, BN/P22, BN/P23, BN/P27, BN/P28, BN/P29, BN/P36, BN/P38, BN/P44, BN/P51, BN/P54, BN/P61, BN/P63, BN/P83, BN/P84, BN/P88, BN/P102, BN/P123, BN/P129, BN/P132, BN/P151, BN/P171, BN/P174, BN/P175, BN/P178, BN/P182, BN/P183, BN/P185, BN/P192, BN/P193, BN/P194, BN/P197, BN/P213, BN/P215, BN/P217, BN/P218, BN/P220, BN/P225, BN/P226, BN/P227, BN/P231, BN/P232, BN/P310, BN/P311.

which a substantial part was unsorted and unpublished. Of these, 842 were catalogued and another 223, deemed to be less important, were labelled with the Object ID number and inserted in the list with a related photograph. New photographic documentation for each piece was completed and 130 drawings representing all those sherds with a clear pot profile were prepared.

Since it was not possible to analyse the material found by Murray and those studied by Evans, and to arrange and match data published by Murray, included by Evans in his 1952 catalogue and his publications of 1953 and 1971, it is important to state here that in this contribution only the pottery located in the storeroom of the museum and known to come from the Borg in-Nadur temple is discussed.

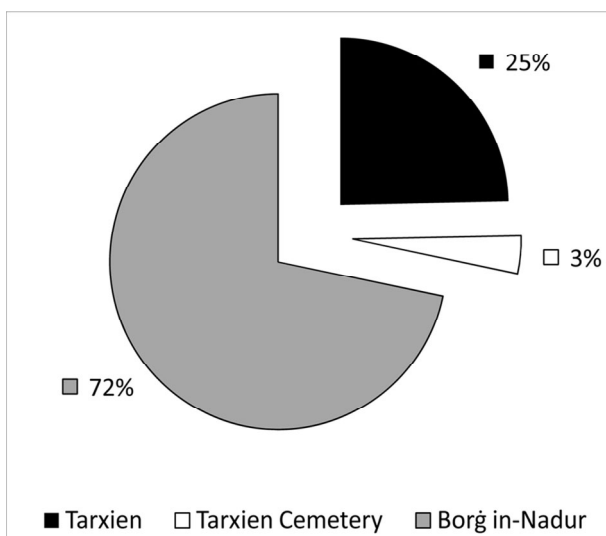


Figure 4.1. Pie chart indicating the percentage distribution of pottery by phase.

The catalogue is included in the accompanying DVD. It is organised as an Excel file and contains also 45 plates in colour. It is divided in three sections, corresponding to the main phases of occupation of the temple: Temple period (Tarxien phase), Early Bronze Age (Tarxien Cemetery phase) and Middle Bronze Age

(Borġ in-Nadur phase)¹⁵. The largest part of the catalogued pieces consists of Borġ in-Nadur phase pottery (579 specimens), while 231 sherds are related to the Tarxien phase whereas just 32 belong to the Tarxien Cemetery phase (Fig. 4.1).

Since the Borġ in-Nadur phase pottery has received less attention in studies dealing with prehistoric ceramics from the archipelago, particular attention will be drawn to it in this contribution.

4.2. Temple period: Tarxien phase

Since the provenance of all the pottery catalogued is the megalithic temple of Borġ in-Nadur it comes as a surprise that the quantity of pottery dated to the Temple period is minimal when compared to the number of Bronze Age sherds which clearly belong to the period of reuse of the temple. Although the fragmentary nature of the pottery complicated the identification process, it was possible to conclude that the site was not occupied in the earlier parts of the Temple period, since all the sherds studied clearly belong to the Tarxien phase.

4.2.1 *Fabrics and decoration*

The visual analysis of the Tarxien phase pottery led to the identification of six fabrics that were identified with letters from A to F. Two main fabrics, A and F, correspond respectively to the ‘fine dark polished ware’ and the ‘sandy pink ware’ recently identified as the most common Tarxien phase fabric varieties amongst the Xagħra Circle assemblage¹⁶ (Fig. 4.2).

Fabric A (fine dark polished): very hard, rarely porous, with calcareous inclusions (very fine 2%); grey body (from 7.5 YR 7/4 pink to 7.5 YR 7/1 gray), black core; surfaces polished and burnished; incised or scratched decoration.

Fabric B (semi-fine brown): hard, with calcareous (medium 5-10%) and quartz inclusions (very fine 2%); brown surface (5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown): gray core (7.5 YR 7/1 gray); generally with white inlay and black blotches.

¹⁵ Malone *et al.* 2009.

¹⁶ Malone *et al.* 2009: 206.

Fabric C (yellow slipped): porous, very hard with calcareous inclusions (from very fine 1% to medium 1%); pink surface (2.5 YR 7/6 light red); yellow slip (10 YR 8/6 yellow).

Fabric D (red slipped): very hard and very porous with calcareous inclusions (very fine, 5%); orange surface (5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow) with red slip (10 R 5/8 red).

Fabric E (coarse pink): very hard, very porous, lithic and calcareous inclusions (fine-medium 10%), voids (medium 2%); dark pink surface (2.5 YR 7/6 light red) unpolished surfaces.

Fabric F (Sandy pink ware): very hard, porous, sandy, with calcareous inclusions (very fine 5%), dark brown surface (7.5 YR 7/4 pink); unpolished surfaces; sometimes fabric is enriched by sea shell fragments.

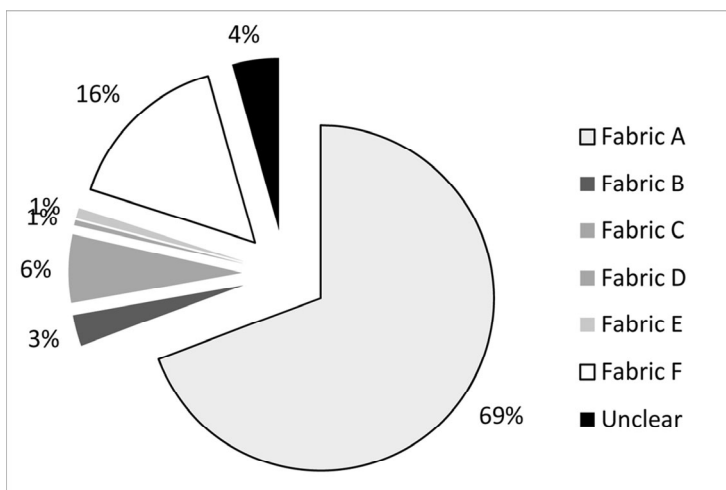


Figure 4.2. Pie chart indicating the distribution of the five Tarxien phase pottery fabrics together with the percentage of specimens with unclear fabric.

Tarxien phase pottery is characterised by a large variety of decorative techniques¹⁷, which is well testified by the evidence of Tarxien¹⁸ and Xaghra Circle¹⁹. Amongst the fragments studied, it is

¹⁷ Trump 2004: 249.

¹⁸ Zammit 1930: 99-119.

¹⁹ Malone *et al.* 2009: 206-212.

possible to distinguish incised/scratched, impressed and plastic decorations. In addition, occasionally an ochre inlay can be found. Incised/scratched decorations include rough vertical striations, acute angles with side apex, ladder bands, lozenge lattice, chevron, simple and thorn volutes, checkerboard pattern, scales pattern and chains of eye-shaped motifs (Fig. 4.3).

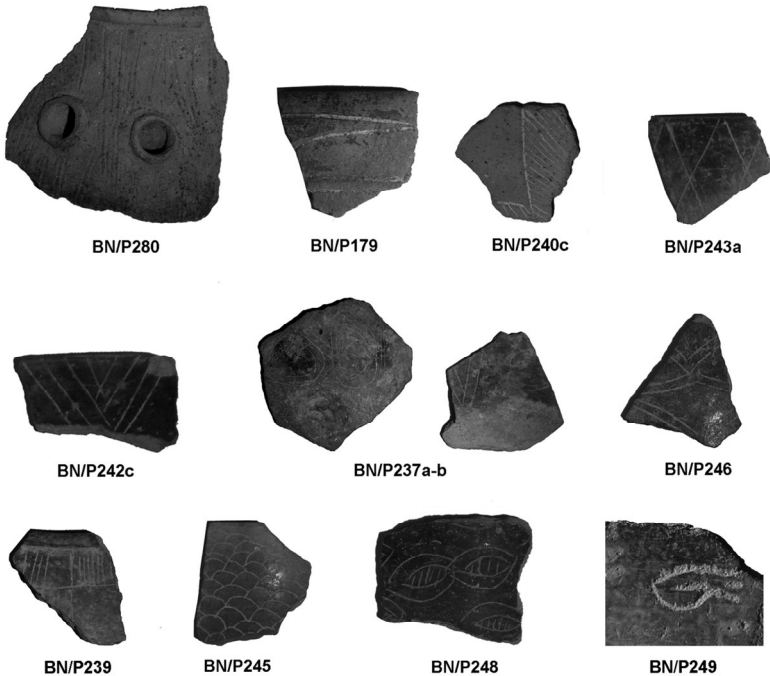


Figure 4.3. Incised/scratched motifs: BN/P280: vertical striations; BN/P179: acute angles; BN/P240c: ladder bands; BN/P243a: lozenge lattice; BN/P242c chevron; BN/P237a-b, BN/P246: simple and thorned volutes; BN/P239: checkerboard pattern; BN/P245: scales pattern; BN/P246: chains of eye-shaped motifs; BN/P249: ideogram (not to scale, photograph by the author).

In addition to repertoires of incised/scratched decorative motifs, an unusual inscribed symbol must be emphasised. It occurs on

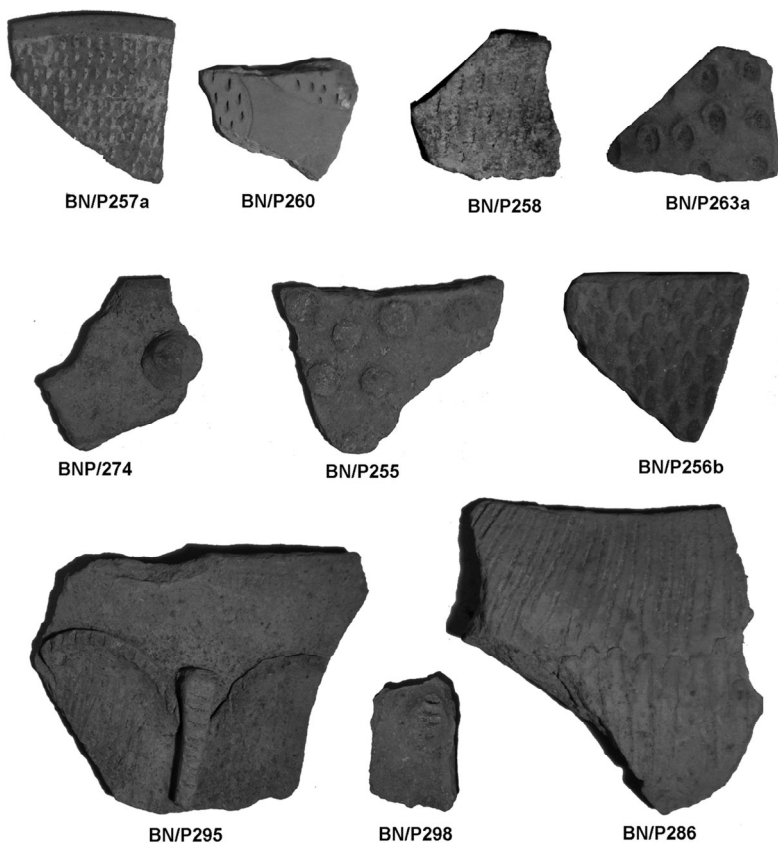


Figure 4.4. Impressed motifs: BN/P257a: jabbed surface; BN/P260: pitted surface; BN/P258: hatched lines; BN/P263a finger bump pattern; plastic decoration: BN/P274: isolated globes; BN/P255: globular pellets; BN/P256b: ovoid pellets; BN/P295: owl's head motif and hatched globe related to the same vessel; BN/P286: rusticated pattern (not to scale, photograph by the author).

BN/P249 (Fig. 4.3, Pl. 36) and is located below the lower attachment of a nose bridge handle belonging to a bowl.

The mark is not known and it not seem to be a decorative motif but a kind of ideogram recalling those on a greenstone cylinder and a polished pebble from Tarxien²⁰.

Impressed decoration is represented by pitted or jabbed surfaces, hatched lines and finger bumped surfaces (Fig. 4.4). Plastic decoration include single isolated studs, studded surfaces with patterns of globular or ovoid pellets and rusticated surfaces (Fig. 4.4).

The most peculiar of the plastic decorative motifs is the owl's head combined with striations or rusticated patterns and with a series of hatched globes, as can be observed in a complete vessel from Tarxien²¹.

4.2.2 Typology, function and parallels

Due to the fragmentary condition of the pottery, it is not easy to identify clearly typological ceramic classes.

A large part of the selection is represented by examples of a carinated bowl without a handle or with a nose bridge handle, classified by Evans as 41/42²². In addition to the six diagnostic examples represented in Fig. 4.5, 11 nose bridge handles²³ testify to the presence of at least 17 bowls of this type.

This vessel, usually occurring in fabric A and at times in fabric B, must have been of particular significance for the acts, presumably of a ritual nature, performed inside the megalithic temples. It is always attested in high numbers at all the other Temple-period sites. Another variety of bowl is represented by BN/P250, BN/P223a (Fig. 4.5, Pls 31, 36) which is comparable with Evans 45-46²⁴ recognisable by the peculiar handles with triangular surmounting termination. Due to the absence of the lower part of the body it is impossible to establish if such pieces had a strainer base as in the

²⁰ Bonanno 1999.

²¹ Trump 2004: 242.

²² Evans 1953: 59, fig. 9.

²³ BN/P249, BN/270g, BN/P270h, BN/P236b, BN/P236c, BN/P270a, BN/P270b, BN/P270c, BN/P270d, BN/P270e, BN/P270f.

²⁴ Evans 1953: 59, fig. 9.

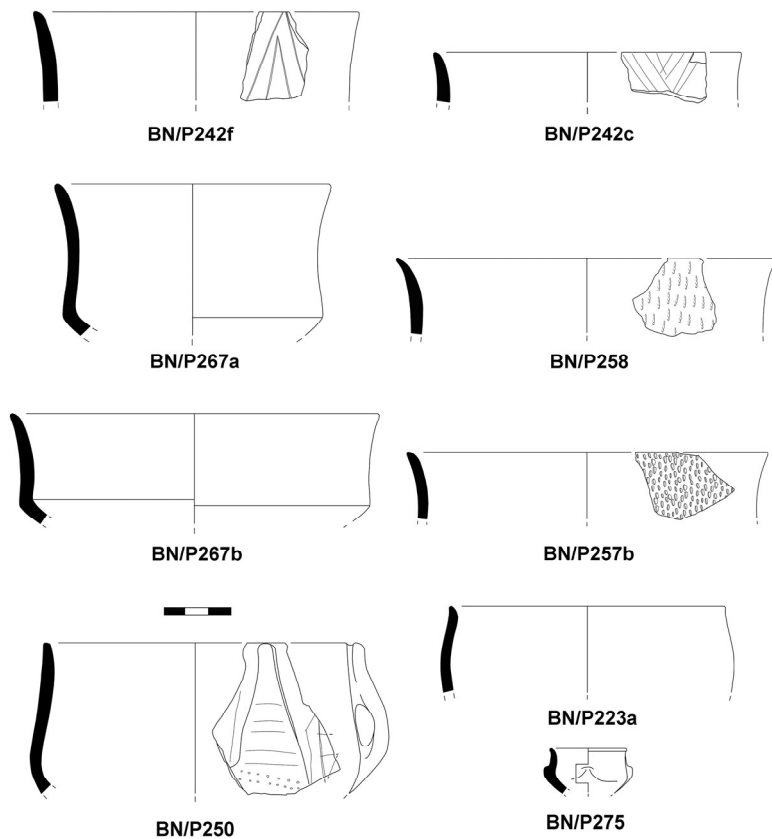


Figure 4.5. Carinated bowl Evans 41-42: BN/P242f, BN/P242c, BN/P267a, BN/P258, BN/P267b, BN/P257b; handled bowl Evans 45-46: BN/P250, BN/P223a; miniature vessel Evans 67: BN/P275.

Evans archetype. Furthermore, a miniature version of Evans type 67²⁵ is the carinated bowl BN/P275 with a lug on the carination (Fig. 4.5, Pl. 41).

Coarse vessels come generally in fabric F with sandy temper. Many of them consist of jars, the typology of which can hardly be identified due to their fragmentary condition. They have rusticated

²⁵ Evans 1953: 59, fig. 9.

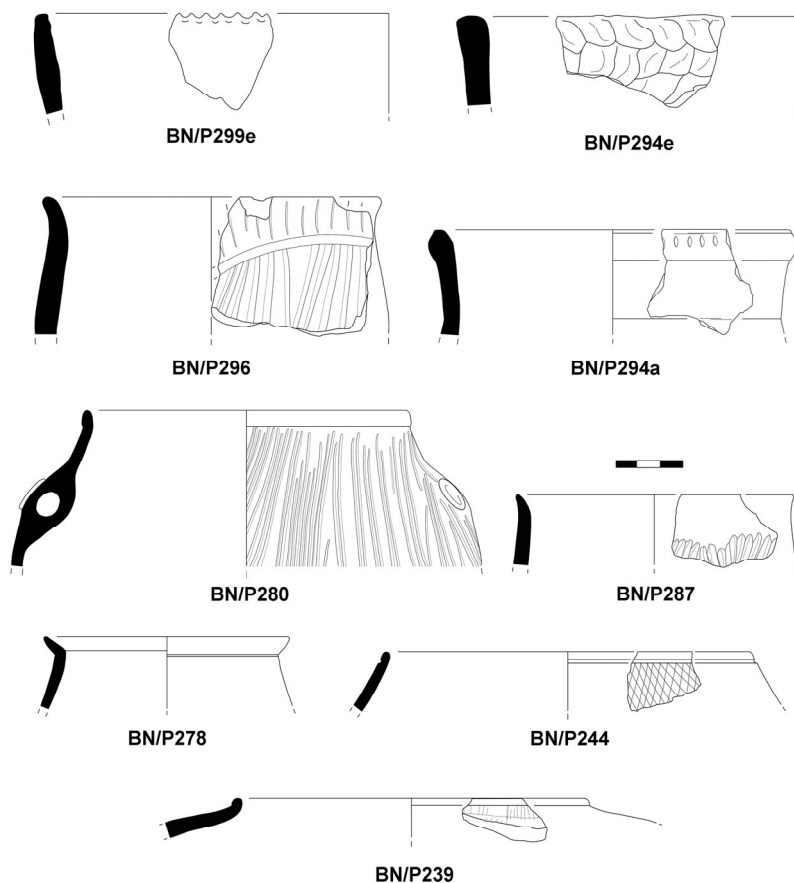


Figure 4.6. Coarse vessels: jars with rusticated surfaces: BN/P249e, BN/P296, BN/P24a, BN/P287; bowl with finger-tip-indented rim Evans 40: BN/P299e; jar with tunnel handles Evans 70: BN/278, BN/P280; jar with lozenge lattice pattern: BN/P244; biconical bowl Evans 60 with scratched dashboard pattern: BN/P239.

surfaces (BN/P287, BN/P294a, BN/P294e, BN/P296) (Pls 43, 44) or a scratched decoration (BN/P244) (Fig. 4.6, Pl. 36).

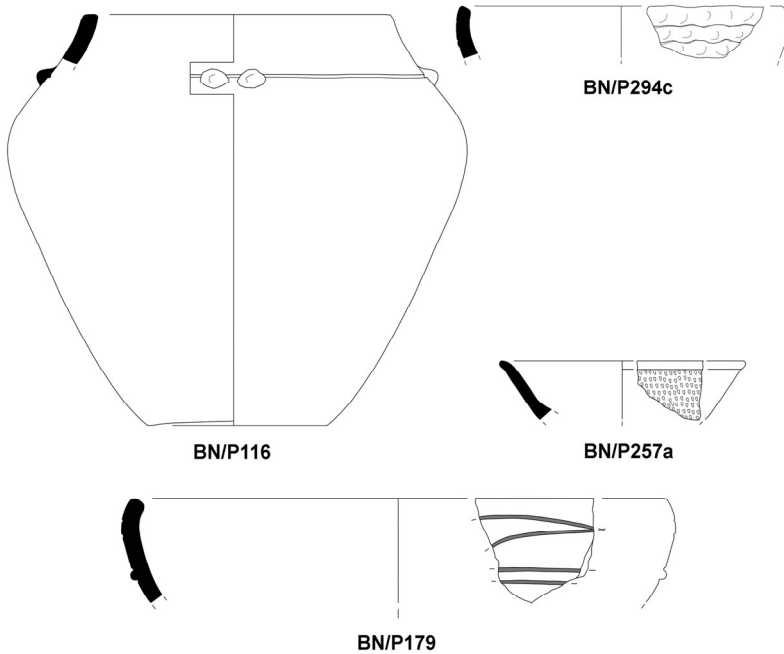


Figure 4.7. Jar with plastic decoration: BN/116; Cup with inverted rim and rusticated surface: BN/P294c; shallow bowl Evans 33 with jabbed surface: BN/P257a; cup with inverted rim: BN/P179.

Among them the bowl with finger-tip-indented rim BN/P299e recalls Evans 40²⁶, while the biconical bowl with scratched checkerboard pattern BN/P239 is comparable with Evans 60²⁷ (Fig. 4.6, Pl. 35).

The same fabric occurs on some examples of a jar with tunnel handles (BN/278, BN/P280, BN/P236a) (Pls 32, 42).

Amongst the bowls, a type of shallow bowl with jabbed surface, BN/P257a, must be pointed out for it finds a fine comparison in Evans 33²⁸ (Fig. 4.7, Pl. 37). Two cups with inverted rim, BN/P294c (Fig. 4.7, Pl. 44) with rusticated surfaces and BN/P179

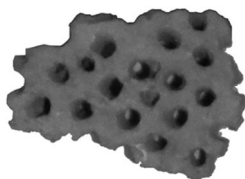
²⁶ Evans 1953: 59, fig. 9.

²⁷ Evans 1953: 59, fig. 9.

²⁸ Evans 1953: 59, fig. 9.

(Fig. 4.7, Pl. 29) with a slipped surfaced and incised decoration with acute angles and with inlay, have no known comparanda, as with the jar with plastic decoration, BN/P116, made of fabric A, the typology of which appears to be a novelty (Fig. 4.7, Pl. 19).

Finally, a curious object (BN/P176) is hard to classify. It is a straight strainer wall sherd (Fig. 4.8, Pl. 20), found in the Chapel B area and published by Murray together with a second larger fragment²⁹. Absent from the repertoire of Maltese prehistoric pottery, it was interpreted by Trump as a fragmentary perforated funnel imported from Ausonian II Lipari (1050-850 BC)³⁰.



BN/P126

Figure 4.8. A fragment of a strainer, BN/P126, from the Chapel B area (photograph by the author).

The recent discovery of a similar piece, belonging to the pierced foot of a pedestal vase from the Tarxien phase layers of the Xaghra Circle³¹ confirms, however, its assignment to the Temple period.

4.3. Early Bronze Age: Tarxien Cemetery phase

The pottery related to the Tarxien Cemetery phase is very scanty, amounting to just 32 pieces. Their presence, however, is significant as it points out that also the temple at Borġ in-Nadur was reoccupied after the end of the Temple period, as happened with other temple sites. This evidence together with the layers containing the same kind of material identified during the excavation of hut 2

²⁹ Murray 1929: 7, pl. 16,1-2.

³⁰ Trump 1961: 261.

³¹ Malone *et al.* 2009: 209-210, fig. 10.16,o.

in the Borg in-Nadur settlement testify to a continuous occupation of this area between the Late Neolithic and the Bronze Age³². Furthermore, the data indicate the absence of any cultural and chronological break at this site.

Some relevant pieces published by Murray and Evans were not traced in the museum; instead different material was found to be marked with the inventory numbers given by Evans. Only the wall sherd BN/P186 (Pl. 29) of our catalogue, published by Murray³³, seems to belong to the restored carinated bowl indicated by Evans as 'BN/P13' and now missing³⁴. In addition, few new shapes were identified.

4.3.1 *Fabrics and decoration*

The specimens analysed, although related to different shapes, shared the same fabric.

Fabric I: very hard fabric, rarely porous, with rare calcareous inclusions (fine, 2%), usually with dark lithic inclusions (very fine 10-20%), rare voids (medium, 2%); orange-yellow surface (from 5 YR 6/8 reddish yellow to 10 YR 7/3 very pale brown), rare red (10R 5/8 red) or yellow fading slip (5 YR 6/8 reddish yellow); gray core, inner walls usually blackened in open vessels; external surfaces polished and burnished.

As for the technology, all pottery was found to be handmade but had a very fine manufacturing procedure that resulted in very symmetric shapes. Few specimens, like BN/P186 (Pl. 29) and BN/P259 Pl. 37), are completely burned, while others are well fired in a uniform way. BN/P21a and BN/P26 (Pl. 6) have the inner walls irregularly blackened with traces of fire possibly due to their use as funerary urns.

Decoration when present is incised with geometric motifs, like triangles and lozenges filled with cross hatching pattern or dots combined with rows of narrow vertical or horizontal lines, and excised with rows of parallel horizontal lines below the rim or chevrons on the body, as shown in Fig. 4.9.

³² See Vella *et al.*, this volume (chapter 3).

³³ Murray 1929: pl. 15.3.

³⁴ Murray 1929: pls 10.5, 22.200; Evans 1971: pl. 32.1.

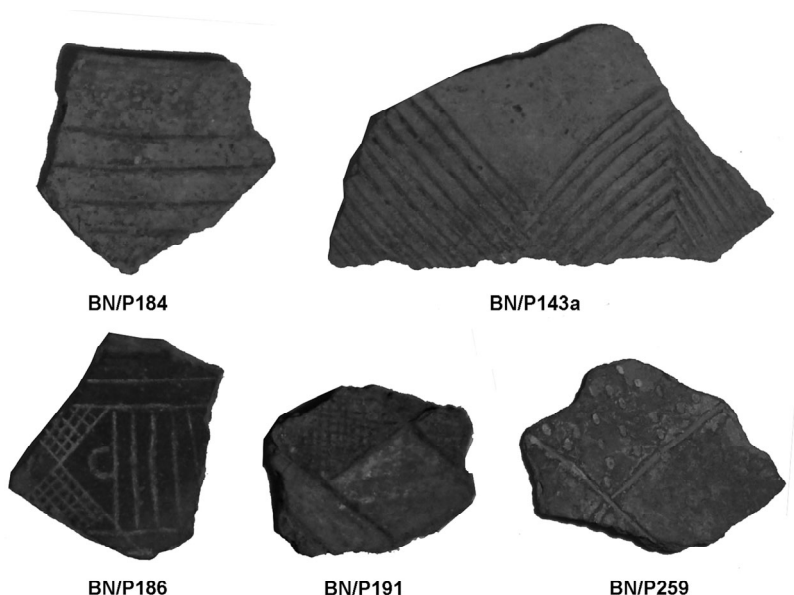


Figure 4.9. Incised motifs: row of parallel lines: BN/P184; multiple angle and triangles with vertex on top: BN/P143a; hatched triangles alternated to series of vertical lines; BN/P186; hatched lozenges: BN/P191; dotted lozenges: BN/P259 (not to scale, photograph by the author).

4.3.2 Typology, function and parallels

Among the identifiable shapes, at least three types of bowl can be distinguished.

Type 1 (BN/P21a) (Fig. 4.10, Pl. 6) has a conical body, slightly curving profile and a distinct everted lip; type 2 (BN/P17, BN/P21b) (Fig. 4.10, Pls 5, 6) presents a globular body, a curving profile and an indistinct everted lip; type 3 (BN/P21c, BN/P26) (Fig. 4.10, Pl. 6) has a globular body, a curving profile and a distinct everted lip forming a low distinct neck. BN/P21a, (Fig. 4.10, Pl. 6) published by Murray³⁵ and Evans³⁶, has a peculiar shape which does not find a match in the main types of Evans' classification, besides a rather uncommon red slip. Bowls of type 2 and 3, very

³⁵ Murray 1929: pl. 24,244.

³⁶ Evans refers to it as BN/P15; Evans 1971: 17, fig. 4.8.

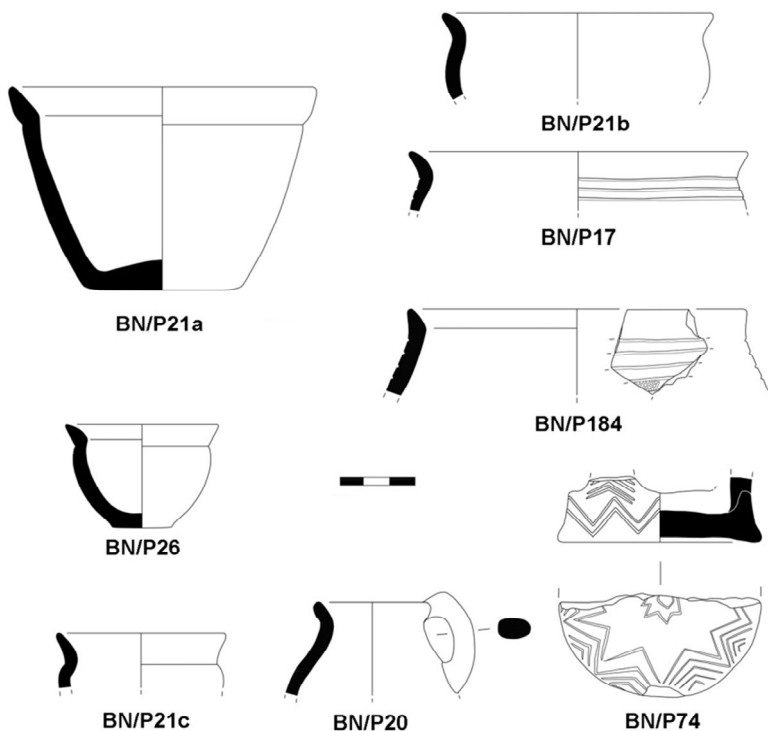


Figure 4.10. Bowls of type 1 (BN/P21a), type 2 (BN/P17, BN/P21b), type 3 (BN/P21c, BN/P26); Jar (BN/P184); Jug (BN/P20); Model (BN/P74).

common in the Tarxien Cemetery repertoire, are comparable with shapes Evans 73-75³⁷, while it is remarkable that both bowls of type 2 are in miniature version. The specimen BN/P94 (Pl. 29) belongs to a jug with a high horned handle similar to vessel TC/P38 from Tarxien³⁸, while fragments BN/P18 (Pl. 5), BN/P24 (Pl. 6), BN/P143 (Pl. 24) and BN/P304 (Pl. 45), although not joining, are related to the same footed bowl Evans shape 75³⁹. BN/P184 (Pl. 29) is a simple jar with curving profile and everted rim and the jug with vertical strap handle BN/P20 (Fig. 4.10, Pl. 5) corresponds to

³⁷ Evans 1953: 66, fig. 10.

³⁸ Evans 1971: 158, fig. 25.8.

³⁹ Evans 1953: 66, fig. 10.

Evans 81⁴⁰, familiar to this repertoire. In the absence of a peculiar decoration and morphological features and since shapes identified are very common, it is unnecessary to provide additional parallels.

For fabric and decorative pattern the specimen BN/P74 (Fig. 4.10, Pl. 15) is compatible with the Tarxien Cemetery production although its surface has a colour much closer to greyish brown. Problematically identified as a ‘platter’ in the inventory sheets of the museum and referred to shape 98 of the Borġ in-Nadur repertoire, it is probably a terracotta model the lower part of which is preserved: on the circular base, slightly curved, a low wall follows the perimeter of the object from which two symmetrical rectangular projections rise. Unfortunately the condition of the piece makes it very hard to suggest the original shape. It can probably be interpreted as a kind of open stand for which no striking comparisons are currently known.

4.4. Middle Bronze Age: Borġ in-Nadur phase

The pottery belonging to the Borġ in-Nadur phase represents the largest part of the pottery assemblage coming from the temple excavations (72%). Whilst we wait for the final publication of the excavations at Tas-Silġ, where pottery of Borġ in-Nadur type has been discovered⁴¹, the 579 diagnostic pieces presented here constitute the most comprehensive ceramic documentation so far known for the Middle Bronze Age.

4.4.1. Fabrics and decoration

The visual analysis led to the identification of five fabrics, three related to fine ware, one semi-fine ware and one coarse ware (Fig. 4.11). It is obvious that a petrographic analysis on thin sections would have been more reliable for the distinction and the characterisation of the fabrics.

The in-depth study confirmed the identification of three classes of fine wares recognised by Trump, which, in his vision, were

⁴⁰ Evans 1953: 66, fig. 10.

⁴¹ Cazzella and Moscoloni (2004-2005: 266) report the discovery of 1032 potsherds of Borġ in-Nadur type from the excavations of the 1960s.

representative of three chronological phases named II B1, II B2, II B3 spanning seven centuries, from 1500 to 700 BC⁴².

In fact, fabric 1, 2 and 4 of our analysis correspond exactly to his II B1, II B2, II B3 pottery classes (Fig. 4.12). Despite the chronological value Trump gave to those three wares, which will be discussed later on in this paper, that main distinction still remains the more reliable and is shared by many scholars. For this reason, the labels ‘fabric 1/II B1’, ‘fabric 2/II B2’ and ‘fabric 4/II B3’ will be used here. For the definition of fabrics 1 and 4, the label adopted by MariaElena Zammit in a recent work about prehistoric pottery coming from a survey carried out at Bahrija shall be used⁴³. In addition, a type of semi-fine ware, fabric 3, and another one of coarse ware, fabric 5, were recognised. With the exception of a reference to a ‘coarse unslipped fabric’ among the Borġ in-Nadur phase ware given by Evans⁴⁴, the coarse variety has never been discussed.

Fine ware

Fabric 1 (Reddish yellow fabric with thick red slip): soft powdery fabric, with calcareous inclusion (very fine-fine, 2-5%) and voids (fine-medium, 2-5%); orange body (5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow), gray core (2.5 Y 6/2 light brownish gray); thick crackling slip from red to scarlet (from 10 R 5/8 red to 10 R 6/4 pale red), sometimes applied in two layers, generally burnished. Linear cut out decoration with white inlay. Corresponding to Trump’s II B1 ware.

Fabric 2 (Pink fabric with red mottled slip): hard-very hard fabric, rarely porous, with calcareous inclusions (fine-medium 5%) and voids (fine 5%); pink body (10 Y 7/4 pale red), gray core (2.5 Y 6/2 light brownish gray); mottled crackling slip with several shades of red (from 2.5 YR 4/8 red to 10 R 6/4 pale red) marked by large irregular black blotches, frequently not burnished. Linear cut out and simple geometric decoration with white inlay. Corresponding to Trump’s II B2 ware.

Fabric 4 (Reddish yellow fabric with dark red to black mottled slip): Hard-very hard fabric, porous, with calcareous inclusions (very fine 2-5%); dark red surface (from 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow to 2.5 YR 2.5/1 reddish black), grey core (2.5 Y 6/2 light brownish gray); thin slip roughly burnished or not burnished with irregular dark blotches. Linear cut out and simple geometric decoration with white inlay. Corresponding to Trump’s II B3 ware.

⁴² Trump 1961: 262.

⁴³ Zammit 2006.

⁴⁴ Evans 1971: 226.

Semi-fine ware

Fabric 3: very hard fabric, with lithic inclusions (very fine 10%) and voids (very fine-fine 2%); orange-gray surface (from 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow to 7.5 YR 7/3 pink); dark grey core (5 Y 4/1 dark grey); not slipped and generally undecorated; surfaces burnished.

Coarse ware

Fabric 5: hard powdery thick walled fabric, with several lithic inclusions of different type (fine-medium 25%) and many voids and cracks (medium-coarse 10%); orange surface (from 10 R 7/6 light red, to 5 YR 8/3 pink), dark grey core (5 Y 4/1 dark grey); surfaces roughly polished.

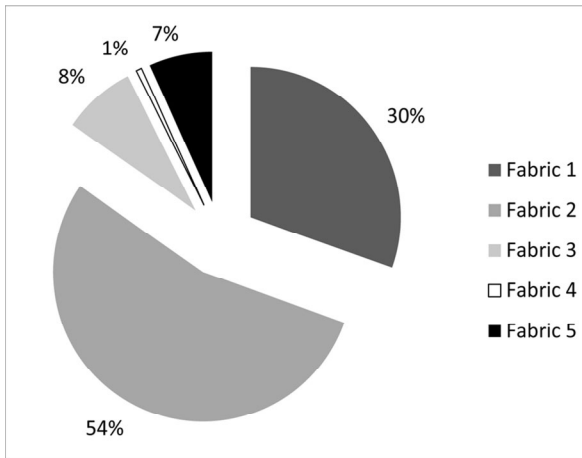


Figure 4.11. Pie chart showing the percentage distribution of the five Borg in-Nadur phase pottery fabrics.

The occurrence of just 18 specimens showing repair holes⁴⁵ in all the fabrics are indicative of the general toughness of the fabrics, even of the softer fabric 1, and could also suggest that broken examples could be easily substituted.

As it clear from the pie chart (Fig. 4.11), fabrics 1 and 2 typical of fine ware, are the most representative in the pottery groups,

⁴⁵ BRG/010/62, BRG/010/75, BRG/010/100, BRG/010/76, BRG/010/112, BRG/010/125, BNP/37, BN/P43/2, BN/P43/30, BN/P49c, BN/P134g, BN/P138g, BN/P140n, BN/P150, BN/P154a, BN/P154c, BN/P162g, BN/P187.

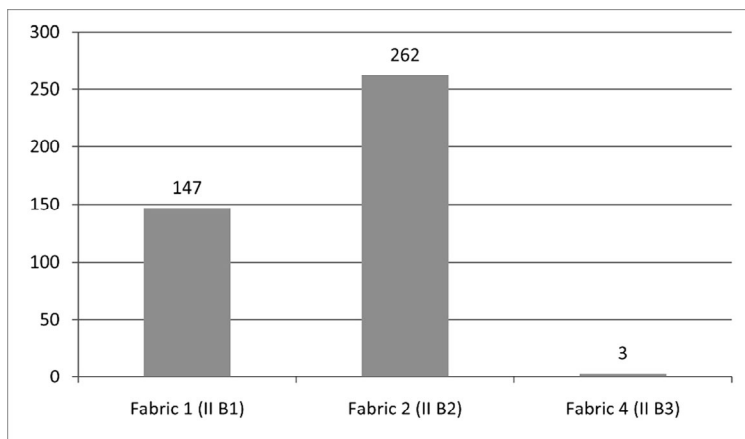


Figure 4.12. Histogram indicating the number of sherds with fabrics 1, 2 and 4, corresponding respectively to Trump's II B1, II B2 and II B3 wares.

while fabric 4 is scarcely attested. Fabrics 3 and 5 related to semi-fine and coarse wares have a very limited distribution. With regards to the relationship between the fabrics we identified and the wares Trump associated with his three phases, it is possible to highlight significant data by analysing the histogram (Fig. 4.12). There is a gradual increase in diagnostic pieces from fabric 1 (II B1) to fabric 2 (II B2), the most common of the fabrics, whilst fabric 4 (II B3) is represented by 3 sherds only.

The more common technical features of the Borġ in-Nadur pottery is treatment of the surfaces, with are generally polished and covered with a red slip, usually burnished. Table 4.1 makes it clear how these treatments are scarcely attested or are indeed absent in semi-fine and coarse wares (fabrics 3 and 5), while, with the exception of fabric 4, they are very frequent in fabrics 1 and 2. In particular it is remarkable that 173 specimens of the 261 representing fabric 2 present burnished surfaces which are unslipped.

Aspects of the manufacturing process of Borġ in-Nadur pottery is a largely neglected argument.

	Fabric 1 (II B1)	Fabric 2 (II B2)	Fabric 3	Fabric 4 (II B3)	Fabric 5
<i>Red slip</i>	58	67	3	-	-
<i>Burnishing</i>	75	173	4	-	-

Table 4.1. Comparative table of the occurrence of red slip and burnishing in the five fabrics.

In her first publications about Bronze Age pottery coming from the temple, Murray stated: ‘The greater number have been thrown on the wheel, but a few are hand-made’⁴⁶. In my survey of Borg in-Nadur pottery from several Maltese sites, undisputable traces of the use of a potter’s wheel were never found. Nevertheless, in many cases it was possible to observe irregular horizontal traces in internal walls of closed shapes that could be interpreted as signs of the use of a polishing tool as well as pot making using a poorly developed potter’s wheel. No finger or palm prints were identified on the pottery from Borg in-Nadur and mat and wattle impressions on the base are limited to trays, like BN/P6 (Fig. 4.33, Pl. 5), because of the surface polishing which, as mentioned above, was rather common.

A significant technical feature is that connected with an embossed base, a peculiar tract of Borg in-Nadur production, present only in 12 examples⁴⁷ in the group of 579. That characteristic could be related to a method of working the clay body on a small pedestal of cylindrical shape, which can be rotated by hand or around which it is possible to work⁴⁸.

With regards to the firing conditions, it is possible to clearly distinguish between specimens of fabric 1, characterised by a uniform red/scarlet colour, fired in a controlled oxidizing atmosphere and examples of fabric 2, with a surface mottled by black blotches, probably fired in oxidizing-reducing atmosphere⁴⁹. What is not clear is if the mottled appearance of vessels of fabric 2

⁴⁶ Murray 1923: 35, 38 (no. 179).

⁴⁷ BRG/010/46, BRG/010/52, BRG/010/58, BRG/010/63, BRG/010/68, BRG/010/72, BN/P3, BN/P4, BN/P8, BN/P58e, BN/P152c, BN/P152d.

⁴⁸ Cuomo di Caprio 2007.

⁴⁹ Cuomo di Caprio 2007.

was a random outcome of an uncontrolled oxidizing-reducing firing conditions or if it was a desired result of skillfully controlled firing conditions in specific kinds of kilns.

Just 51 specimens of 579 were totally burned and their fabric was not properly identifiable. The conical bowl BN/P135b (Pl. 21) presents an over burned rim, while the internal walls seem more well fired going towards the base, suggesting that it was fired in an overturned position in a furnace with a lower firing chamber.

One peculiar feature of Borg in-Nadur pottery, when present, is the decoration which is essentially characterised by simple geometric patterns and an absence of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic representations. Of 579 specimens studied, 282 were decorated.

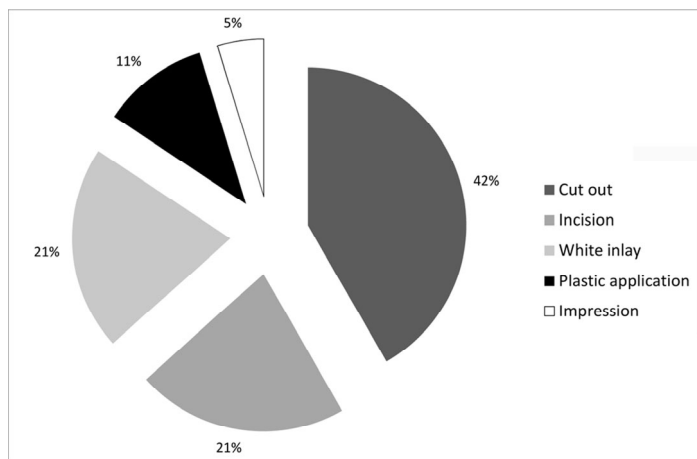


Figure 4.13. Pie chart indicating the percentage distribution of the principal decorative systems.

Four main types of decoration can be found: cut out, incised, impressed or stamped and with plastic application; in addition, in the first two cases very frequently a secondary decorative element, represented by an inlay of white paste, usually occurs (Fig. 4.13).

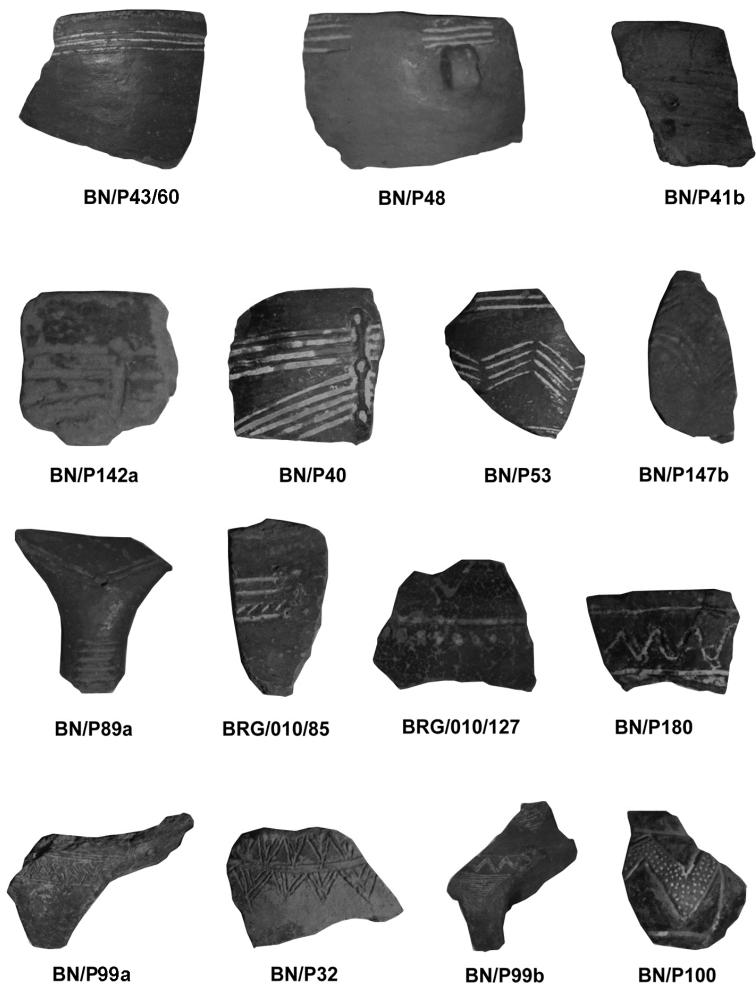


Figure 4.14. Cut out/incised motifs: BN/P43/60: motif A; BN/P48: motif B; BN/P41b: motif C; BN/P142a: motif D; BN/P40: motif E; BN/P53: motif F; BN/P147b: motif G; BN/P89a: motif H; BRG/010/85: motif I; BRG/010/127: motif L; BN/P/180: motif M; BN/P99a: motif N; BN/P32: motif O; BN/P99b: motif P; BN/P100: motif Q (not to scale, photograph by the author).

It was impossible to locate the examples of dribbled ware reported by Murray as coming from the Apsidal Building⁵⁰. The difference between cut out and incised decoration is not in the motif repertoire, which is basically the same, but in the production caused by the use of different tools. Cut out motifs were done with a pointless tool, or better with a truncated point, since the section of grooves is quadrangular and not triangular, while the incised decoration was done with a sharp pointed utensil.

The principal motifs of the cut out/incised decoration, which are the more common, 15 of them can be identified (A-Q). In order to explain these features, 15 examples in which decoration is clear were taken as a representative schematic model (Fig. 4.14).

- *Motif A* (BN/P43/60): continuous row of horizontal lines.
- *Motif B* (BN/P48): series of rows of horizontal lines.
- *Motif C* (BN/P41/b): row of horizontal lines marked with dots.
- *Motif D* (BN/P142a): row of horizontal lines crossed by a vertical line flanked by dots.
- *Motif E* (BN/P40): row of horizontal lines and a chevron crossed by a vertical plastic line flanked by dots.
- *Motif F* (BN/P53): chevron motifs in horizontal series.
- *Motif G* (BN/P147b): row of curved lines.
- *Motif H* (BN/P89a): multiple triangles with a dot on the apex.
- *Motif I* (BRG/010/85): row of alternated continuous and dotted horizontal lines flanked by dots.
- *Motif L* (BRG/010/127): horizontal line and horizontal series of dots.
- *Motif M* (BN/P/180): wavy line between a pair of horizontal lines.
- *Motif N* (BN/P99a): irregular series of broken lines.
- *Motif O* (BN/P32): opposite horizontal series of multiple triangles.
- *Motif P* (BN/P99b): triangle filled with horizontal lines.
- *Motif Q* (BN/P100): chevrons filled with a dotted pattern.

While usually cut out and incised decoration occur together, plastic applications are often the only decorative system, at times combined only with the cut out technique. The two main plastic elements used are pellets and ropes (Fig. 4.15). Small pellets in horizontal series can occur by the necks of closed shapes, as on

⁵⁰ Murray 1923: 38, pl. 20,5; Murray 1925: pl. 20, 209; Trump 2002: 272.

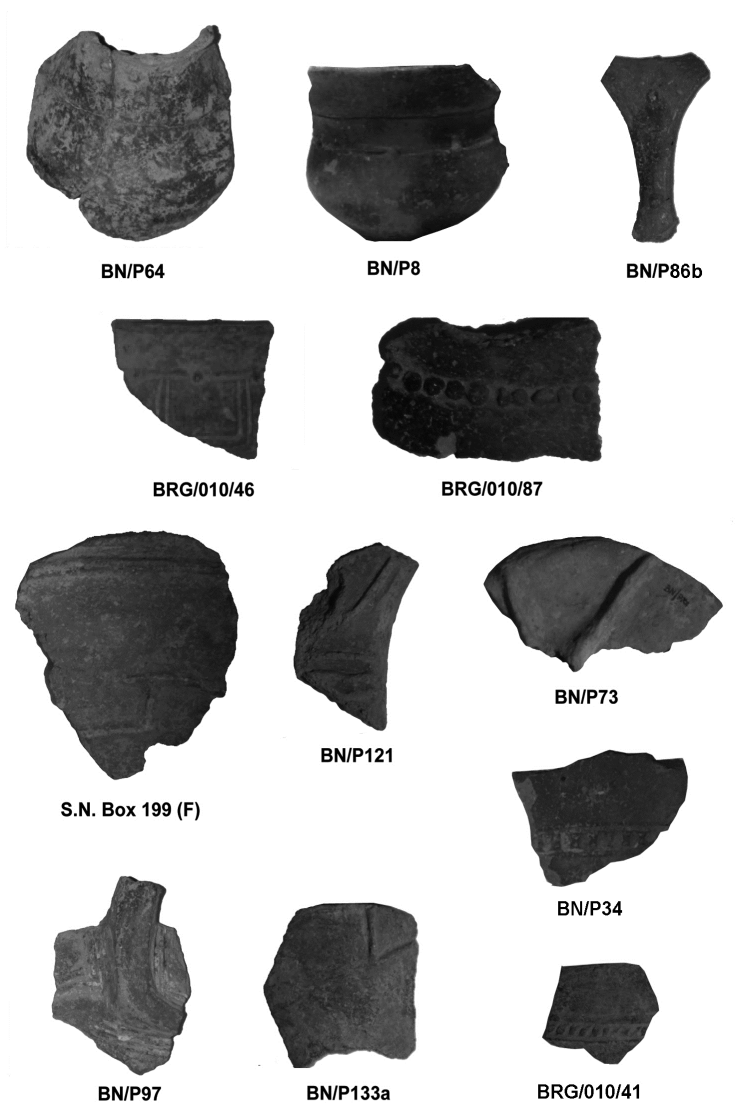


Figure 4.15. Plastic elements: BN/P64, BN/P8, BN/P86b, BRG/010/46, BRG/010/87: pellets; S.N. Box 199 (F), BN/P121, BN/P73, BN/P133a, BN/P97: rope bands; impressed elements: BN/P34, BRG/010/41 (not to scale, photograph by the author).

BN/P64 (Fig. 4.15), or set into a cut out horizontal groove, as in dipper cup BN/P8 (Fig. 4.15).

They can be also present alone and marked by an impressed dot, as for BN/P86b (Fig. 4.15), or combined with a simple geometrical square pattern as in BRG/010/46 (Fig. 4.15). Finally, pellets can appear as a tight series, horizontally in shallow cut out grooves, as in BRG/010/87 (Fig. 4.15).

The other more common plastic application is the rope band, with triangular and U-shaped section. It can be present in a combination so as to form a net pattern, as in the not catalogued sherd S.N. Box 199 (F) (Fig. 4.15), or it can be imitating other patterns usually through incision, as in BN/P121 (Fig. 4.15). In other cases, single angular (BN/P133a) (Fig. 4.15) or curvilinear rope bands (BN/97) (Fig. 4.15) can occur, even combined in a radial pattern as in BN/P73 (Fig. 4.15).

Decoration impressed with roller stamps is rather rare and, as stressed further on, it seems to belong to a later phase of the production. In the few examples identified, two kinds of roller stamps can be made out. The first one resulted in a pattern with a horizontal series of dots flanked by a couple of lines (BN/P34) (Fig. 4.15) and a second one marking a horizontal series of diagonal lines flanked by a couple of lines (BRG/010/41) (Fig. 4.15).

The white inlay is in general always present, combined with both cut out and impressed decoration. The filling paste, probably composed of gypsum, was set with a very weak natural adhesive, which caused, in most occasions, its partial or total detachment. Comparisons with the Borg in-Nadur-type pottery found in Sicily and scientific analyses could provide more information about the technical aspects of this decorative method⁵¹.

The quantitative relationship between the five fabrics and the decorative techniques is presented in Table 4.2.

The most relevant points that must be made here include the substantial scarcity or total absence of decoration of the semi-fine and coarse ware (fabrics 3 and 5) and, excepting the under-represented fabric 4, the high number of cut out examples in fabric 1 and of plastic decorated specimens in fabric 2.

⁵¹ See Tanasi, this volume (chapter 10).

	Fabric 1 (II B1)	Fabric 2 (II B2)	Fabric 3	Fabric 4 (II B3)	Fabric 5
<i>Cut out</i>	65	45	3	1	-
<i>Incised</i>	19	26	1	-	-
<i>Plastic</i>	5	20	4	-	-
<i>Impressed</i>	4	5	2	1	-
<i>White incl.</i>	22	32	2	1	-

Table 4.2. Comparative table of the main decorative systems occurring in the five fabrics.

4.4.2. Typology, function and parallels

With regards to typology, 10 main groups were identified: cups and basins, amphoras, jugs and juglets, dipper cups, beakers, trays, cooking pots, storage jars, lamps, and lids. Within each category, sub-types and varieties were distinguished using a system of numbers and letters (i.e., type 1A).

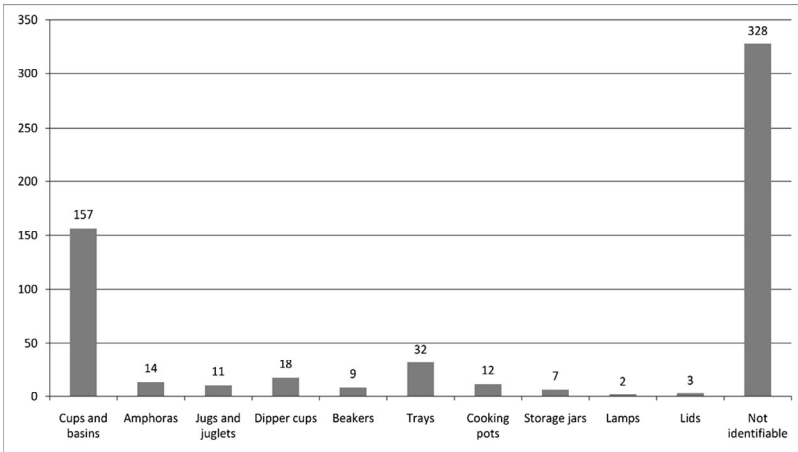


Figure 4.16. Histogram indicating the quantities identified for each typological class.

Classification criteria were based exclusively on morphological features. In addition to the 10 groups, another category labelled 'varia' included clay objects which were difficult to interpret. A large part of the material (328 sherds) was unfortunately represented by body or wall sherds or by very small fragments for which it was impossible to make out the original shapes; for this reason these pieces were omitted from the typological classification (Fig. 4.16).

To find typological comparisons for the identified shapes was a rather difficult task considering the scarcity of published data for Borġ in-Nadur phase pottery. Besides the few publications in which drawings or photographs of good preserved exemplars are provided, like the contributions about the Borġ in-Nadur settlement⁵², Mtarfa⁵³ and the Xagħra Circle⁵⁴, the widest selection of Borġ in-Nadur pottery is that presented in Murray's publications⁵⁵ and especially in her *Corpus of the Bronze-Age pottery of Malta* of 1934⁵⁶. For the classification of the repertoire the seminal works remains Evans' publications of 1953 and 1971⁵⁷.

Given such limitations, the recent analysis of Borġ in-Nadur pottery from the sites of Għar Mirdum, In-Nuffara (Gozo), Mtarfa and Bahrija, carried out by the author between 2007-2010 and aimed towards an overall reappraisal of the Borġ in-Nadur culture⁵⁸, offer new and useful comparative data. Furthermore, the exhaustive study of Borġ in-Nadur-type pottery found in Sicily provides additional significant information.

Cups and basins

Conical cups and basins, with simple base or pedestal, represent the most common vessels of the Borġ in-Nadur repertoire. They are also the most frequent vessels amongst the ceramic finds from the temple totalling 157 pieces, although many of them were so tiny

⁵² Trump 1961.

⁵³ Sagona 1999.

⁵⁴ Malone *et al.* 2009.

⁵⁵ Murray 1934.

⁵⁶ Murray 1934.

⁵⁷ Evans 1953; Evans 1971. In our survey, all the types identified by Evans in 1953 were found with the exception of E 107, which was later labelled as BN/P10 (Evans 1971: fig. 4.5).

⁵⁸ Tanasi 2010a; Tanasi and Vella forthcoming.

that it was impossible to define precisely the typology. Corresponding to shapes 92 and 93 of Evans' classification⁵⁹, they are the more recognisable pottery type for this period in the Maltese archipelago and in Sicily⁶⁰.

Since the cups and basins are essentially the same as far as morphology and decoration go (only dimensions differ), 30 diagnostic pieces of both shapes were identified and divided in typological groups. Due to the fragmentary nature of the sherds it was not possible to distinguish which of them belonged to the footed type. As for the completely restored pedestal cup BN/P13, since its entire profile is not preserved, it cannot be considered reliable as the vessel type for this shape.

The guideline used for the typological distinction was represented by peculiarities of the rim and in some cases also by body profile. Four main types were identified. For both types 1 and 2, three sub-types were distinguished (1A, 1B, 1C and 2A, 2B, 2C).

Type 1A (BRG/010/129, BN/P13, BN/P43.41, BN/P45a, BN/P135b): conical or hemispherical body with straight indistinct rounded rim; cut out decoration with white inlay or undecorated; vertical strap handles or lug handles below the rim (Fig. 4.17, Pls 5, 10, 11, 21).

Type 1B (BRG/010/90, BRG/010/103, BN/P40, BN/P136b, BN/P138a): conical or hemispherical body with straight indistinct rim with quadrangular section; cut out decoration with white inlay or undecorated; vertical strap handles below the rim (Fig. 4.18, Pls 3, 7, 21).

Type 1C (BRG/010/88, BRG/010/97, BRG/010/101, BN/P43/1, BN/P43/40, BN/P45h, BN/P49h, BN/P108c, BN/P133a, BN/P138g): conical shallow body with straight indistinct rim with quadrangular section curving inward; cut out decoration with white inlay or undecorated; plastic applications in shape of rope bands with geometric patterns; vertical strap handles below the rim (Figs 4.19, 4.20, Pls 3, 7, 10, 12, 13, 19, 20, 22).

Type 2A (BRG/010/117, BN/P122, BN/P173): conical shallow body with curving profile, straight indistinct thinned rim; cut out decoration with white inlay; vertical strap handles below the rim or on the rim (Fig. 4.21, Pls 4, 20, 28).

Type 2B (BN/P47c, BN/P48, BN/P49a, BN/P110, BN/P137a) conical body with curving profile, straight indistinct rim with quadrangular section; cut out decoration with white inlay or undecorated; plastic applications like rope bands and pellets; vertical strap handles or lug handles below the rim (Fig. 4.21, Pls 12, 19, 21).

⁵⁹ Evans 1953: 70, fig. 11.

⁶⁰ See Tanasi, this volume (chapter 10).

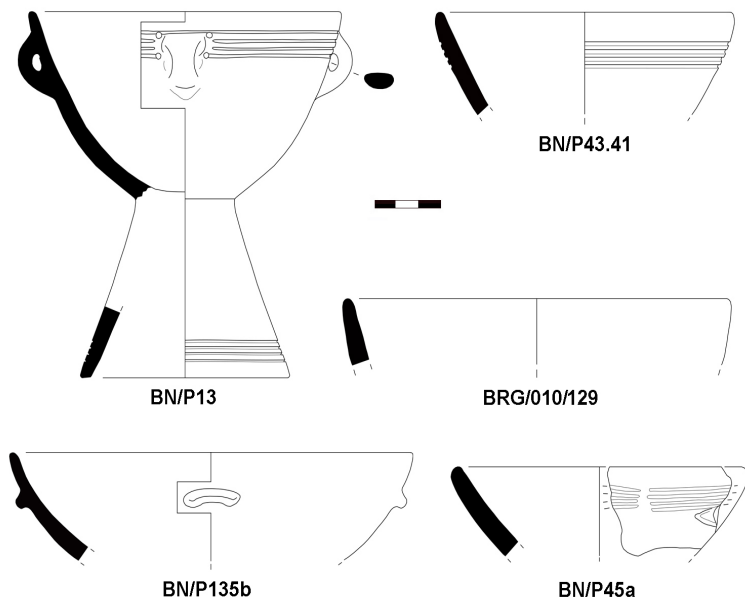


Figure 4.17. Cup/basin of type 1A: BN/P13, BN/P43.41, BRG/010/129, BN/P135b, BN/P45a.

Type 2C (BRG/010/127): conical body with curving profile, straight indistinct thickened rim with quadrangular section slightly curving inward; cut out and impressed decoration with white inlay (Fig. 4.22, Pl. 4).

Type 3 (BN/P45i): hemispherical body with curving profile, indistinct thinned rim; cut out decoration with white inlay (Fig. 4.22, Pl. 12).

Type 4 (BN/P127a): carinated body, with continuous convex profile; distinct rim with quadrangular section; undecorated (Fig. 4.22, Pl. 20).

For what regards size, basins have a rim diameter which goes from 36 cm (BN/P40) to 44 cm (BN/P43.40), while cups are between 8 and 32 cm (BRG/010/90). For cups a standard seems to be a diameter of the mouth set between 20 and 24 cm although it is not possible to detect two examples which are identical. About the pedestal, the only evidence comes from the over-restored example BN/P13 which shows an elongated conical hollow foot with indistinct end with quadrangular section, with a foot diameter of 14 cm and a rim diameter of 20 cm; the pot stands at 34 cm.

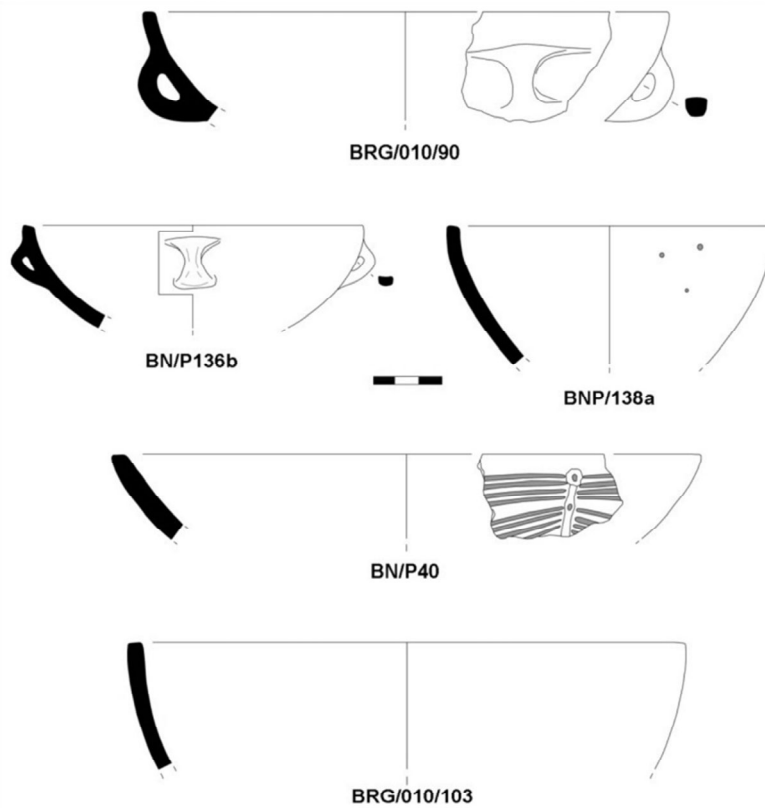


Figure 4.18. Cup/basin of type 1B: BRG/010/90, BN/P136b, BN/P138a, BN/P40, BRG/010/103.

To interpret the function of these pots is a rather difficult task. Considering the average dimensions, cups do not seem apt to have been used as drinking vessels although specimens of type 1C have rim features suitable for the purpose of drinking. Handles, when present, seem to have had the function of holding the vessel rather than lifting or carrying it.

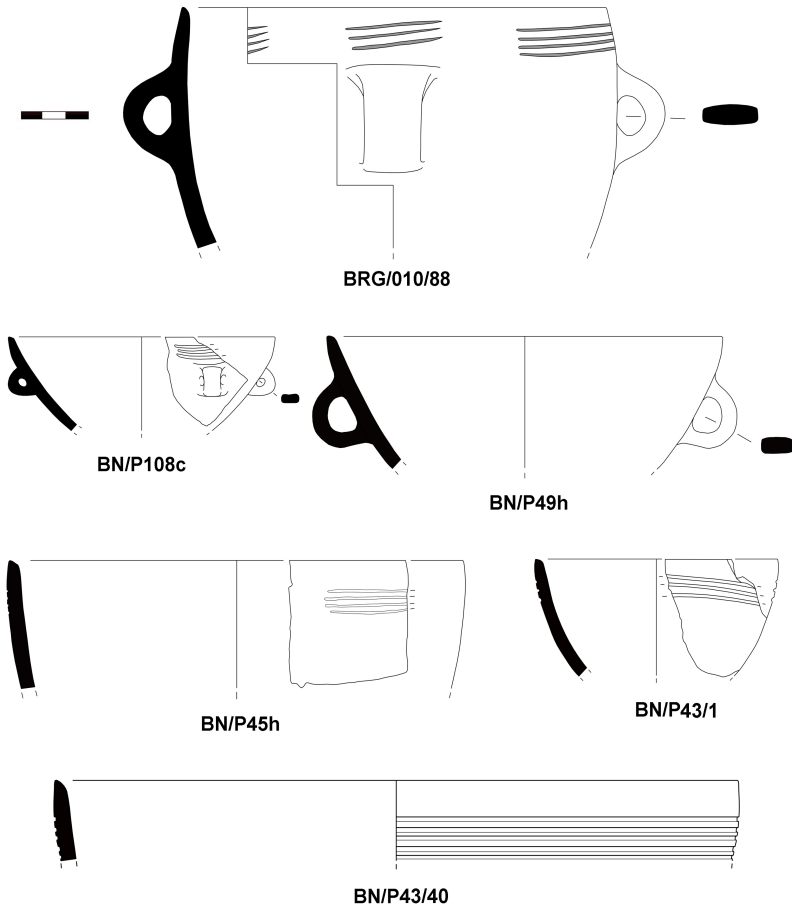


Figure 4.19. Cup/basin of type 1C: BRG/010/88, BN/P108c, BN/P49h, BN/P45h, BN/P43/1, BN/P43/40.

Flat based and pedestal cups could be used for mixing liquids or another suggestion is that they were used for holding solid food or liquid food to be consumed with wooden spoons. Since no data are available about furniture for this period it can be assumed that pedestal cups could be used for eating in a seated position with crossed legs.

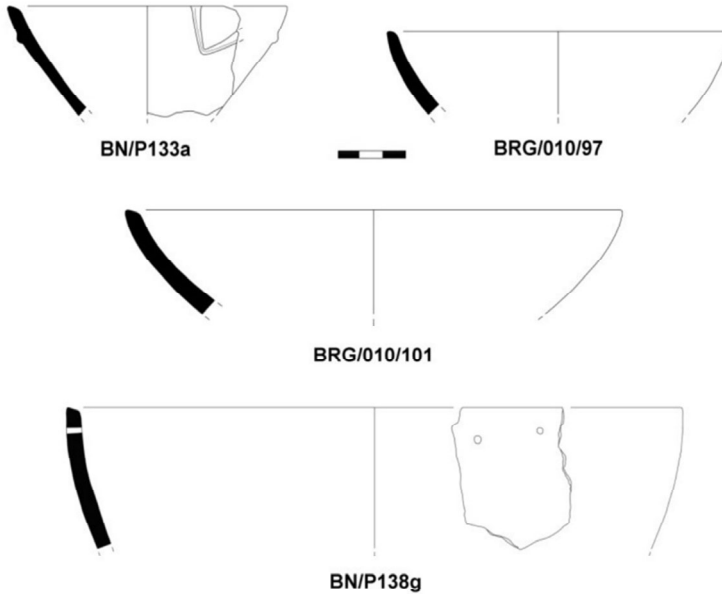


Fig. 4.20: Cup/basin of type 1C: BN/P133a, BRG/010/97, BRG/010/101, BN/P138g.

Having said this, they can certainly be considered as part of the table ware of this period. Despite their sizes, basins were actually not storage jars. Take, for instance, the Borg in-Nadur-type pottery found at the necropolis of Cozzo del Pantano in Sicily⁶¹. One can observe that a well proportioned pedestal basin with a rim diameter of 28 cm was 37 cm high⁶². In this case, pedestal basins from Borg in-Nadur with a rim diameter in the 36-44 cm range, if proportioned in a similar manner, were probably higher than 58 cm. Considering the essential similarity between cups and basins, it can be suggested that the vessels were meant for holding different amounts of the same kind of solid or semi-liquid food.

⁶¹ See Tanasi, this volume (chapter 10).

⁶² See Tanasi, this volume (chapter 10).

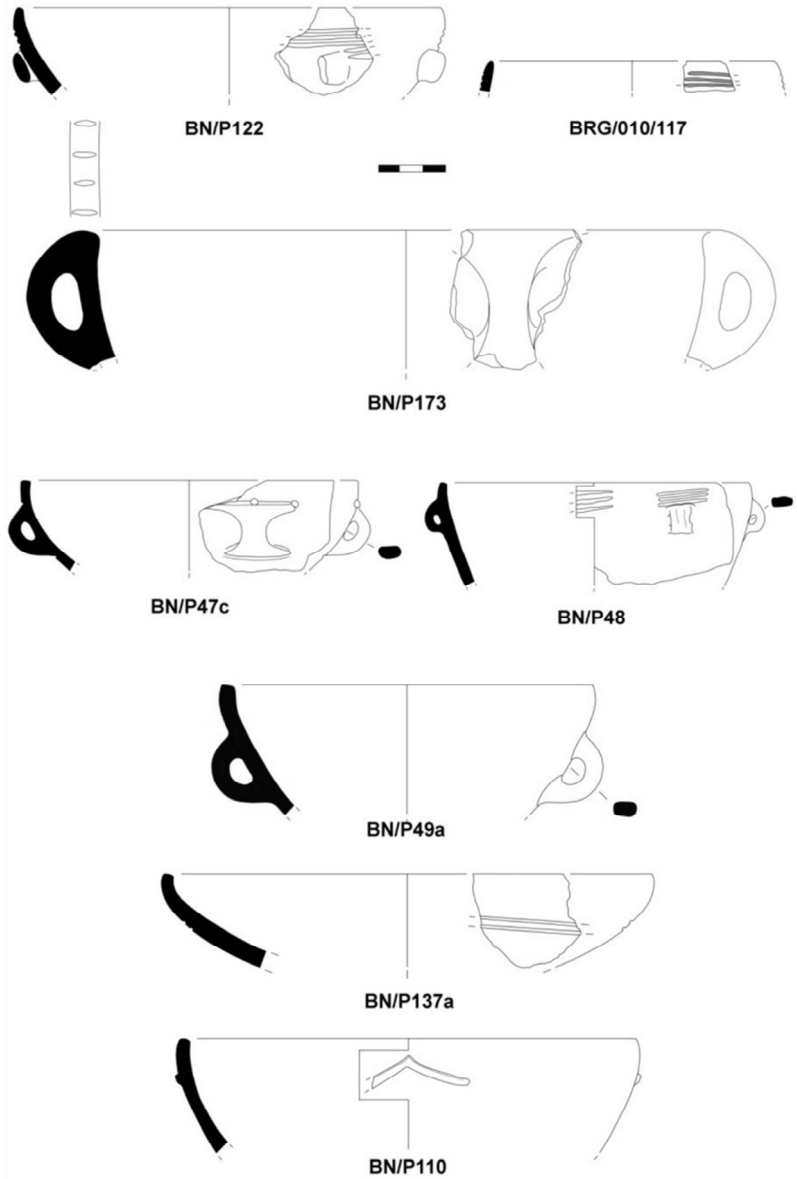


Figure 4.21. Cup/basin of type 2A: BN/P122, BRG/010/117; BN/P173; type 2B: BN/P47c, BN/P48, BN/P49a, BN/P137a, BN/P110.

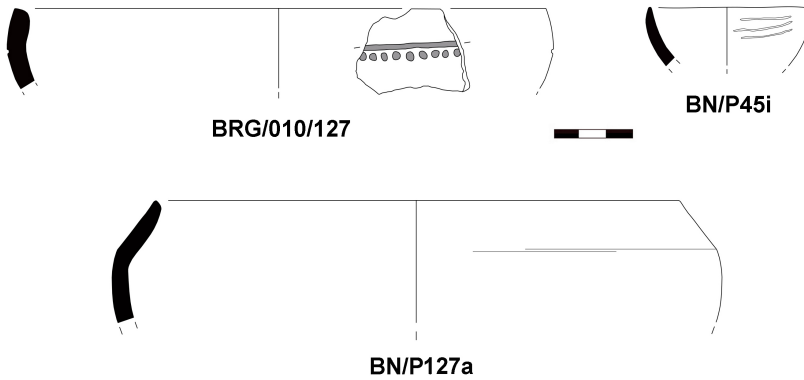


Figure 4.22. Cup/basin of type 2C: BRG/010/127; type 3: BN/P45i; type 4: BN/P127a

Maybe basins, especially the pedestalled ones, were used for feasts involving more persons, as in Middle Bronze Age Sicily, where pedestal basins were used together with pedestal cups during the feast in funerary rituals⁶³.

Morphologically, type 1A can be compared with TSG96/205/15 from Tas-Silġ⁶⁴, with vessels P1, P2, P6, P11 from Mtarfa⁶⁵, and with the unpublished cup MRD64/P/750 from Ghar Mirдум (Fig. 4.23). In Sicily, the type is also comparable with a bowl from Chiusazza cave⁶⁶ and with conical cups 11250, CP23/9, 11242, 11240 from tomb 23 of Cozzo del Pantano⁶⁷.

Type 1B is equivalent to cups P4a, P10, P13a, P13b from Mtarfa⁶⁸ and to two unpublished vessels: MRD64/P/850 (Fig. 4.23) from Ghar Mirдум and NNF60/P/09/1 (Fig. 4.23) from In-Nuffara. Good Sicilian comparisons come from tombs 13 (11222, 11223) and 23 (11241, 11244, 11246, 11247, 11249) of Cozzo del Pantano⁶⁹.

⁶³ Maniscalco 1999; Tanasi and Vella forthcoming.

⁶⁴ Sagona 2000: 86, fig. 14.4.

⁶⁵ Sagona 1999: 54-55, fig. 3:1, 3:5, 3:6, 3:7.

⁶⁶ Tinè 1965: 237 (no. 431), 239, fig. 18,1, pl. 36,1-5.

⁶⁷ See Tanasi, this volume (chapter 10).

⁶⁸ Sagona 1999: 30-31, fig. 3.2, 3.8, 4.2, 4.4, p. 55.

⁶⁹ See Tanasi, this volume (chapter 10).

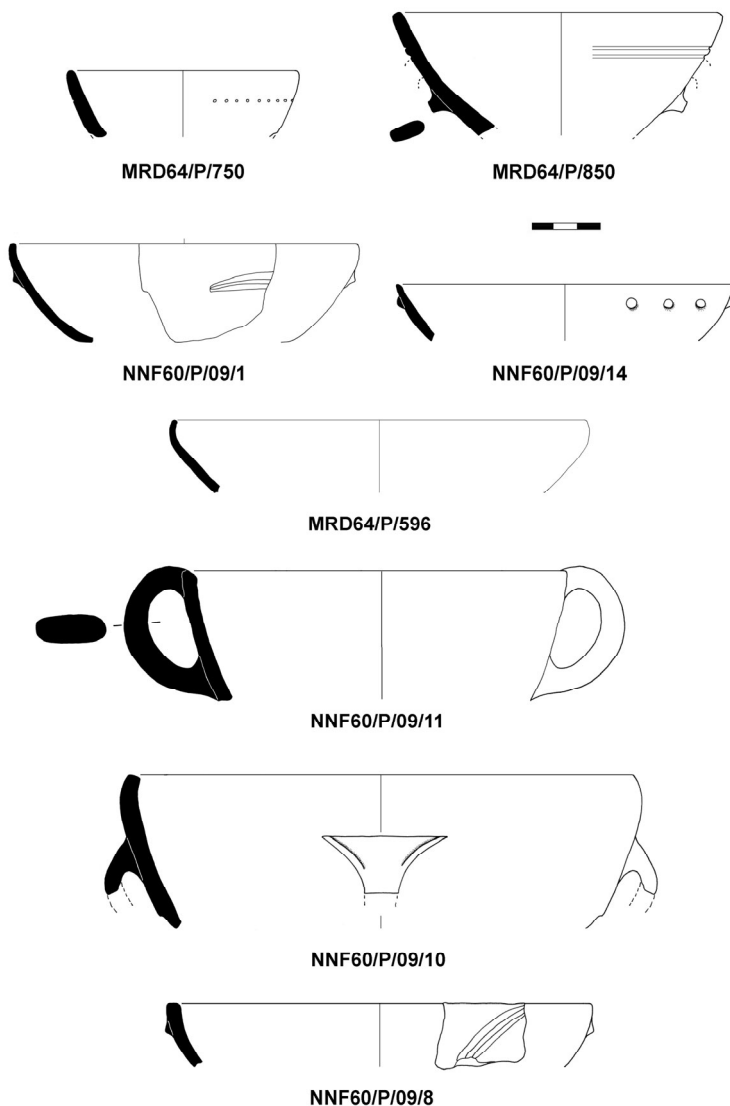


Figure 4.23. Ghar Mirdum, cups/basins of type 1A: MRD64/P/750; 1B: MRD64/P/850; 2A: MRD64/P/596; In-Nuffara, cups/basins of type 1B: NNF60/P/09/1; 1C: NNF60/P/09/14; 2A: NNF60/P/09/11; 2B: NNF60/P/09/10; 2C: NNF60/P/09/8 (drawings by Denise Cali and Carlo Veca).

In addition, this type of pedestal cup is widely diffused in several other Sicilian contexts (Thapsos, Matrensa, Ognina, Vendicari)⁷⁰.

Type 1C can be related to the profile of specimen 916 (65) from the Xaghra Circle⁷¹, and with the unpublished cup NNF60/P/09/14 from In-Nuffara (Fig. 4.23). Furthermore, cup BN/P133a, although it has a different typology, shares the same plastic decoration of example P12 of Mtarfa⁷². Finally, the same typology is shared by examples 11251, 11253, 11254, 11258, 11259 found in tomb 23 of Cozzo del Pantano, in Sicily⁷³.

Type 2A finds comparison with vessel P28a from Mtarfa⁷⁴ and with the unpublished piece MRD64/P/596 (Fig. 4.23) from Ghar Mir dum. Furthermore, shape BN/P173 is equivalent to the unpublished example NNF60/P/09/11 (Fig. 4.23) from In-Nuffara.

Type 2B is recalled by cup P5a from Mtarfa⁷⁵ and the unpublished vessel NNF60/P/09/10 from In-Nuffara (Fig. 4.23).

Type 2C can be compared only to the unpublished cup NNF60/P/09/8 from In-Nuffara (Fig. 4.23). In addition, with its shape and decoration it is basically identical to a cup found in tomb 6 of the Sicilian necropolis of Matrensa⁷⁶.

For types 3 and 4 it was not possible to find a typological match in the available documentation.

Amphoras

The amphora is one of the less known shape of the Borg in-Nadur pottery repertoire. Simply defined ‘ovoid jar with conical neck’ and identified as type 100 by Evans, its features have never been discussed⁷⁷. The 13 specimens analysed here can be distinguished in two main typological groups: type 1 (with its sub-types 1A, 1B, 1C) and type 2 (split in types 2A and 2B).

⁷⁰ Tanasi 2008: 62 (tipo IIA).

⁷¹ Malone *et al.* 2009: 215, fig. 10.19,v.

⁷² Sagona 1999: 30-31, fig. 4.1, p. 55.

⁷³ See Tanasi, this volume (chapter 10).

⁷⁴ Sagona 1999: 30-31, fig. 3.4, p. 56.

⁷⁵ Sagona 1999: 31, fig. 4.3, p. 55.

⁷⁶ Orsi 1903: 147, pl. 10,3.

⁷⁷ Evans 1953: 70-71, fig. 11.

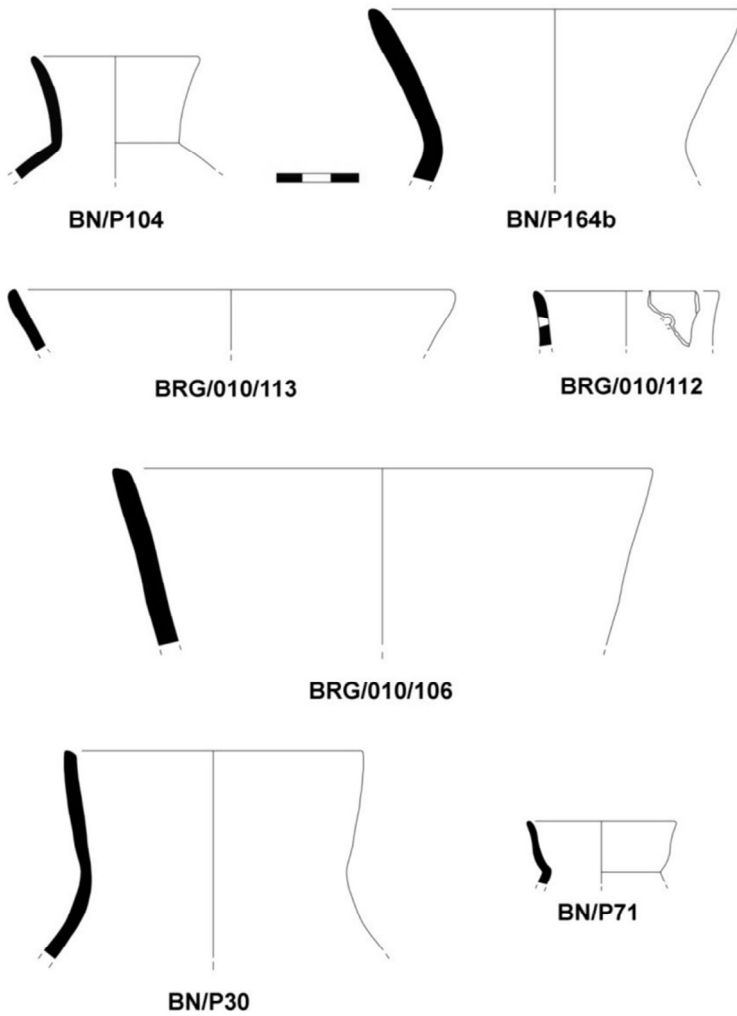


Figure 4.24. Amphoras of type 1A: BN/P104, BN/P164b, BRG/010/113, BRG/010/112, BRG/010/106; type 1B: BN/P30; type 1C: BN/P71.

Type 1A (BRG/010/112, BRG/010/113, BN/P104, BN/P164b): distinct high conical neck with indistinct rounded rim (Fig. 4.24, Pls 4,18, 27).

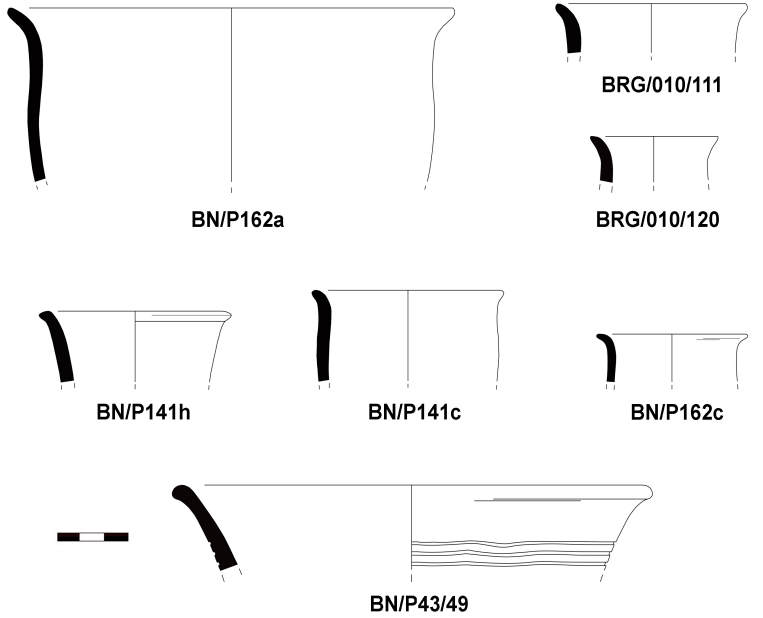


Fig. 4.25: Amphoras of type 2: BN/P162a, BRG/010/111, BRG/010/120, BN/P141h, BN/P141c, BN/P162c, BN/P43/49.

Type 1B (BRG/010/106, BN/P30): indistinct high neck slightly conical with indistinct rim with quadrangular section curved inward (Fig. 4.24, Pls 4, 6).

Type 1C (BN/P71): distinct low conical neck with indistinct rounded rim and a wall thickening by the attachment point (Fig. 4.25, Pl. 15).

Type 2 (BRG/010/111, BRG/010/120, BN/P43/49, BN/P141c, BN/P141h, BN/P162a, BN/P162c): high neck with concave profile with indistinct everted thinned rim; undecorated or with cut out decoration with white inlay (Fig. 4.25, Pls 4, 10, 23, 26).

This shape presents a wide variety in size, from very large examples with a rim diameter of about 24 cm (BN/P162a, BN/P43.49, BN/P30) to miniature vessels with a rim diameter of 6.8 cm (BRG/010/120). With the exception of pieces of type 1B, in general rim features do not seem to have been intended to receive clay lids. This suggests that this shape was probably not meant to be a transport jar or a vessel intended for long-term storage of dry substances, but more likely a liquid container.

Comparisons for the types of amphoras are rather scarce. Specimen BN/P104 of type 1A seems to recall the fragmentary piece P23 from Mtarfa⁷⁸.

Jugs and juglets

Just like conical cups and basins, jugs of different sizes are the most common shape of the Borġ in-Nadur repertoire, largely attested also in Sicily⁷⁹. Despite this, the specimens coming from the temple area are not so numerous. Three types can be distinguished: type 1, type 2 (divided in 2A and 2B) and type 3 (divided in 3A, 3B and 3C).

The terminological distinction between jug and juglet is based on dimensions. Jugs are considered examples of types 1, 2A and 2B with a rim diameter of 12 cm and a height up to 18 cm. Juglets are vessels of types 3A, 3B and 3C, with a standard rim diameter of 8 cm. Their function is inferred from the rim features which generally suggest their use as pouring vessels, although types 1 and 2A seem more apt for containing liquids.

Type 1 (BN/P3): neckless ovoid body with slightly inverted distinct rim with quadrangular section; embossed indistinct base; two vertical strap handles, one surmounting and the other smaller and regular; cut out decoration with plastic applications like large pellets (Fig. 4.26, Pl. 5).

Type 2A (BN/P105): low distinct cylindrical neck with straight indistinct thinned rim; vertical strap handle between neck and shoulder; undecorated (Fig. 4.26, Pl. 18).

Type 2B (BN/P4): ovoid body, low distinct cylindrical neck with straight indistinct thinned rim; surmounting vertical strap handle with probable axe-shaped appendix; undecorated (Fig. 4.26, Pl. 5).

Type 3A (BN/P56b): distinct high conical neck with indistinct rounded rim; vertical strap handle; undecorated (Fig. 4.26, Pl. 13).

Type 3B (BN/P120): distinct low conical neck with distinct everted rim; surmounting vertical strap handle with probable axe-shaped appendix; undecorated (Fig. 4.26, Pl. 19).

Type 3C (BN/P52): distinct low conical neck with distinct everted rim; vertical strap handle; cut out decoration (Fig. 4.26, Pl. 13).

In addition to these diagnostic specimens, few other examples can be recalled. Juglet BN/P66 (Pl. 14) belongs to type 2B,

⁷⁸ Sagona 1999: 32, fig. 5.3, p. 55.

⁷⁹ Tanasi 2008: 57-60.

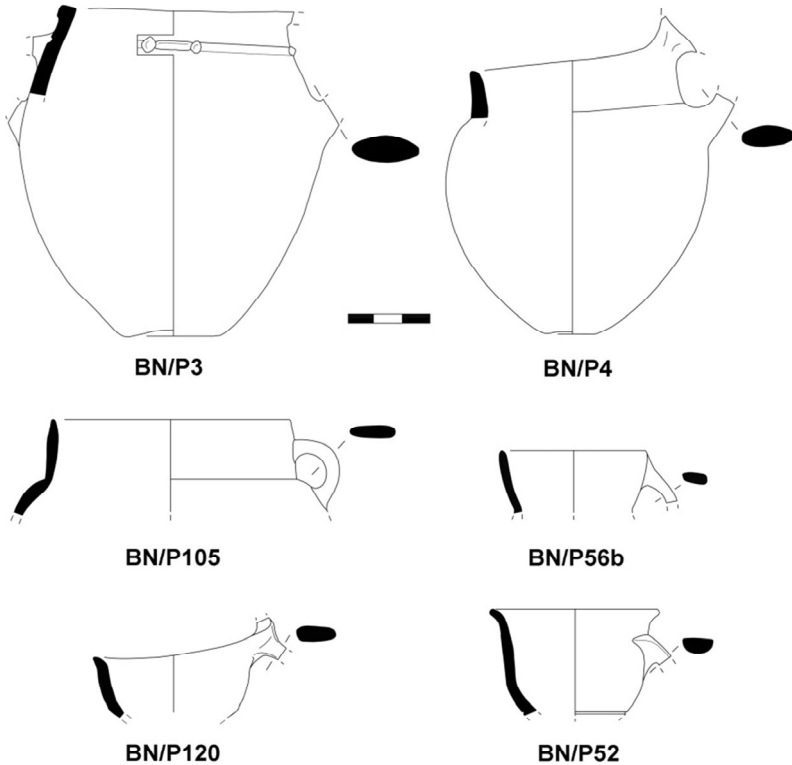


Figure 4.26. Juglets of type 1: BN/P3; type 2A: BN/P105; type 2B: BN/P4; type 3A: BN/P56b; type 3B: BN/P120; type 3c: BN/P52.

fragmentary vessel BN/P56a (Pl. 13) is related to type 3A, and BN/P64 (Pl. 14) and BN/P65 (Pl. 14) belong to type 3C.

The types identified more or less match Evans' classification. Type 1 corresponds to Evans 103, type 2B to Evans 105, type 3A to Evans 106 and types 3B and 3C can be compared to Evans 101⁸⁰. Only the jug of type 2A seems to be a completely new type.

⁸⁰ Evans 1953: 70-71, fig. 11.

Type 1 remains without comparisons although it seems to recall slightly vessel P33 from Mtarfa⁸¹.

Type 2A cannot be precisely related to any other examples even if the handle with axe-shaped termination which could also be peculiar to it, is rather common. During my survey of Bronze Age pottery at the National Museum, I found two examples from In-Nuffara, another two (MRD64/P/66, MRD64/P/154) from Ghar Mirdum, and one from Bahrija (B/P21). Outside the Maltese archipelago, the type is known in Sicily from two pieces, namely from tombs 6 e 27 of Thapsos⁸² and a third one from the settlement⁸³, and one from Ortigia (Siracusa)⁸⁴.

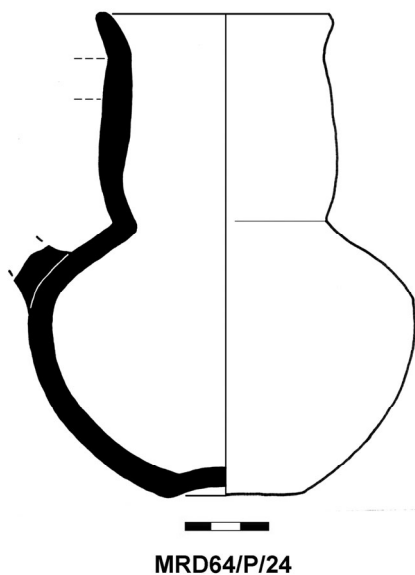


Figure 4.27. Jug of type 3C from Ghar Mirdum (1:2, drawing by Denise Cali and Carlo Veca).

⁸¹ Sagona 1999: 32, fig. 5.5, p. 56.

⁸² Orsi 1895: col. 101, fig. 7 and col. 112, fig. 19.

⁸³ Pelagatti and Voza 1973: 44 (no. 138), pl. 9,138.

⁸⁴ Orsi 1919: col. 486, fig. 77.

Type 2B finds a striking match with an unpublished vessel found in tomb E⁸⁵ of the Thapsos necropolis, currently on display at the archaeological museum of Siracusa.

Type 3A can be compared to juglet TC/P44 from Tarxien⁸⁶ and in Sicily with vessels from tombs 34, 38 and E of Thapsos⁸⁷ and tomb 6 of Matrensa⁸⁸ and with specimen 11224 from tomb 13 and 11264 from tomb 23 of Cozzo del Pantano⁸⁹.

Type 3B recalls a juglet from tomb 23 of the Sicilian necropolis of Plemmirio⁹⁰.

Type 3C has a perfect match just with the unpublished example MRD64/P/24 from Ghar Mirdum (Fig. 4.27).

Dipper cups

Small handled dipper cups are rather common in the Borg in-Nadur repertoire. Even though one is dealing with fragmentary material, the peculiar surmounting handles with axe-shaped (axe handle) or T-shaped terminations (T handles or catapult handles) make the identification of some types possible⁹¹. Three main types can be distinguished: type 1, type 2 (divided in sub-types 2A, 2B), and type 3.

Type 1 (BN/P1): deep conical body with straight indistinct thinned rim; flat based; vertical strap handle slightly surmounting with axe-shaped termination on top; cut out decoration with white inlay (Fig. 4.28, Pl. 5).

Type 2A (BN/P58a, BN/P96): shallow hemispherical body with indistinct rounded rim; surmounting strap or loop handles with quadrangular profile, with probable termination of unknown type; undecorated (Fig. 4.28, Pls 13, 18).

Type 2B (BN/P93): shallow hemispherical body with indistinct rim with quadrangular section; vertical strap handle slightly surmounting with axe-shaped termination on top; undecorated (Fig. 4.28, Pl. 18).

Type 3 (BN/P8, BN/P66, BN/P68c, BN/P69, BN/P100, BN/P127b,): deep carinated body; everted distinct rounded rim; surmounting vertical strap handle; cut out decoration with application of plastic pellets (Fig. 4.28, Pls 5, 14, 18, 20).

⁸⁵ Gentili 1951: 215-216.

⁸⁶ Evans 1971: 160, pl. 55:9.

⁸⁷ Tanasi 2008: 36-37, 57 (tipo IIA).

⁸⁸ Orsi 1903: 147, pl. 11,6.

⁸⁹ See Tanasi, this volume (chapter 10).

⁹⁰ Orsi 1891: 132, pl. 11,21.

⁹¹ Evans 1953, pl. 13.

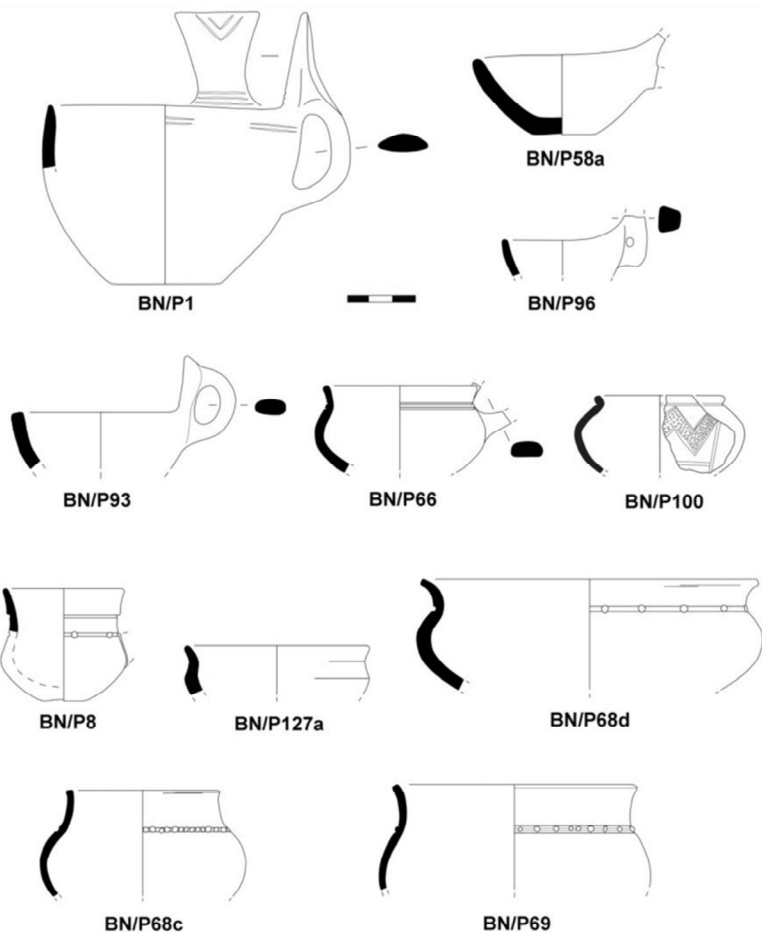


Figure 4.28. Dipper cups of type 1: BN/P1; type 2A: BN/P58a, BN/P96; type 2B: BN/P93; type 3: BN/P66, BN/P100, BN/P8, BN/p127a, BN/P68d, BN/p68c, BN/P69.

Type 1 corresponds to the archetype Evans shape 94, type 2A can be related to Evans 94 or 95, depending on the kind of terminations, while type 2B is basically a variety of type 1⁹².

⁹² Evans 1953: 70-71, fig. 11.

Morphologically different is type 3 that can be compared with Evans 101/102⁹³. The presence of a fourth type, comparable with Evans 95⁹⁴, can be identified by the presence of five examples of catapult or T-shaped handles (BN/P86a, BN/P86b, BN/P89a, BN/P89b, BN/P87) (Pl. 17) which probably belong to dipper cups. Moreover, two fragmentary strap handles with curved profile, axe-shaped terminations and central septum (BN/P90, BN/P93) (Pls 17, 18) seems to belong to a fifth type equivalent to Evans 96⁹⁵.

The surmounting handle, common in these examples, and the limited size of the base, point to their use as dippers. The dimensions – a rim diameter ranging between 8 to 12 cm – and the rim features fit with that function. The only exceptions are BN/P1 and BN/69 which are larger than the others, but even in this case the massive handle of BN/P1 could imply the same use. It is significant that only type 1 and type 2B present the typical axe-shaped termination above the handles, which is considered as one of the easily distinguishing feature of Borg in-Nadur phase pottery. This kind of termination is exclusive of dipper cups of types 1 and 2b (Evans 94) and jugs of type 2B (Evans 105), suggesting that they were parts of the same set used for specific activities or that they were just used at the same time. Because of this, it is not possible to assign with precision five specimens of axe-shaped terminations found (BN/P76, BN/P92, BN/P91, BN/P 95) (Pls 17, 18) to their original shapes, even though we know that this would have had to be a dipper cup or a jug.

Although dipper cups are prominent shapes in the Borg in-Nadur phase repertoire, and are numerous among the finds from the temple area, comparisons are yet very rare. For type 1 only one similar example from the Xaghra Circle⁹⁶ is known. For what regards the diffusion of handles with axe-shaped terminations, what was said about the juglets of type 2A holds.

Types 2A and 2B find no parallels. Type 3 seems to match with vessel P21 from Mtarfa, specimen BN/P127a (Fig. 4.28, Pl. 20) recalls the unpublished cup MRD/64/P/406 from Għar Mirdum (Fig.

⁹³ Evans 1953: 70-71, fig. 11.

⁹⁴ Evans 1953: 70-71, fig. 11.

⁹⁵ Evans 1953: 70-71, fig. 11.

⁹⁶ Malone *et al.* 2009 : 215, fig. 10.19,w.



Figure 4.29. Dipper cup of type 3 from Ghar Mirдум (drawing by Denise Cali and Carlo Veca).

4.29), and the profile of BN/P68d matches that of two undecorated dipper cups found at Bahrija⁹⁷. A surmounting loop handle probably belonging to a dipper cup, the typology of which is not clear, was also found at the Ghar Dalam site⁹⁸. Catapult or T-shaped handles, belonging to dipper cups of type 4, are attested at Ghar Mirдум (MRD64/P/157) and the Borġ in-Nadur village site⁹⁹. In Sicily they are also attested in the Thapsos settlement¹⁰⁰. No comparisons can be found instead for the fifth type.

Beakers

The basic shape of the tableware set is represented by drinking cups, which come into a variety of types.

Because of the fragmentary condition of the assemblage from Borġ in-Nadur, many small open vessels cannot be properly interpreted. Among them, at least three different types of beakers can be identified: type 1, type 2 and type 3.

Type 1 (BN/P57): deep elongated hemispherical body with indistinct rounded rim; flat indistinct base; undecorated (Fig. 4.30, Pl. 13).

Type 2 (BN/P58e, BN/P72, BN/P101, BN/P151): deep conical body with indistinct rounded of thinned rim; embossed base; undecorated (Fig. 4.30; Pls 14, 15, 18).

Type 3 (BN/P125): deep hemispherical body with indistinct rounded rim; small and rough vertical strap handle; undecorated (Fig. 4.30; Pl. 20).

Type 4 (BN/P55, BN/P58f, BN/P170a): low bell shaped pedestal with everted edges on which is set a body which features are not clear for the fragmentary state of the specimens (Fig. 4.30; Pls 13, 14, 28).

⁹⁷ Trump 1961: pl. 16 (lower left figure, middle).

⁹⁸ Ashby and Despott 1916: pl. 8, fig. 1:11.

⁹⁹ Trump 1961: pl. 14 (middle).

¹⁰⁰ Pelagatti and Voza 1973: 44-45 (nos 139, 140), pls 9:139-140.

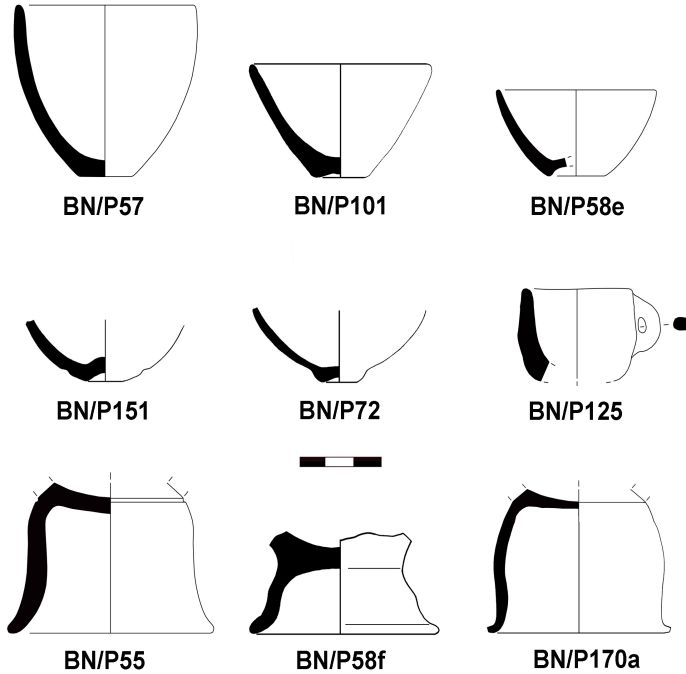


Figure 4.30. Beaker of type 1: BN/P57; type 2: BN/P101, BN/P58e, BN/P151, BN/P72; type 3: BN/P125; type 4: BN/P55, BN/P58f, BN/P170a.

While types 1-3 are basically absent from Evans' classification, type 4 can be compared with Evans 99¹⁰¹ and it is reasonable that specimens BN/P55, BN/58f and BN/P170a shared the same morphology as the body of the archetype chosen by Evans for this shape. The variety of shapes – handle-less, handled and footed – for such a simple vessel suggests that different customs involving drinking activities may have existed; alternatively different shapes were used for holding different liquids.

Despite their common use, only a few comparisons can be provided for the beakers identified.

¹⁰¹ Evans 1953: 70-71, fig. 11.

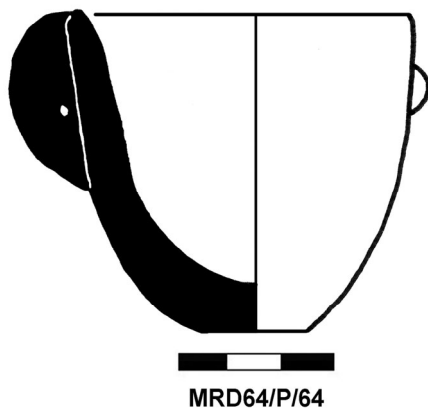


Figure 4.31. Beaker of type 3 from Ghar Mirdum (1:1, drawing by Denise Cali and Carlo Veca).

Type 1 seems to be the only known example with its features. The peculiar embossed base of type 2 finds a comparison in specimen P17a from Mtarfa¹⁰². Type 3 has a striking comparison in the unpublished handled beaker MRD64/P/64 from Ghar Mirdum (Fig. 4.31). Unfortunately, the three examples of type 4 cannot be related to other known shapes.

Trays

Trays, simple and with central septum, are one of the few shapes documenting the existence of a coarse ware in the Borg in-Nadur phase pottery production. Three main types can be distinguished: type 1, type 2 (divided in sub-types 2A, 2B and 2C), and type 3.

Type 1 (BN/P152a): shallow conical body with markedly everted profile; indistinct thinned rim curved outward; indistinct flat base (Fig. 4.32, Pl. 25).

Type 2a (BN/P81a): shallow conical body with slight everted profile; indistinct thickened rim with quadrangular section; distinct flat base with slightly protruding edges (Fig. 4.32, Pl. 16).

Type 2b (BN/P81h): shallow conical body with everted profile; indistinct rounded rim curved outward; distinct flat base with markedly protruding edges.

¹⁰² Sagona 1999: 55, fig. 6.2.

Type 2c (BN/P81b): shallow conical body with markedly everted profile; indistinct rim with quadrangular section curved outward; distinct and thickened flat base (Fig. 4.32; Pl. 16).

Type 3 (BN/P80): deep hemispherical body: indistinct rim with quadrangular section markedly curved inward; distinct thickened base (Fig. 4.32, Pl. 16).

Type 4 (BN/P6, BN/P187): shallow conical body with slightly everted profile; indistinct rim with quadrangular section; distinct and thickened flat base with markedly protruding edges; divided by a central septum (Figs 4.32, 4.33; Pls 5, 29).

Among the 32 trays coming from Borg in-Nadur, 25 of them belong to a simple kind (BN/P80, BN/P81a-BN/P81p, BN/P82a, BNP/82b, BN/P152) (Pls 16, 17, 25) while 8 can be interpreted as trays with a central septum (BN/P6, BN/P79a-BN/P79f, BN/P187) (Pls 5, 15, 29). Unfortunately, only specimen BN/P6 is sufficiently well preserved to be recognised as a distinct type.

The singular features of piece BN/P187 (Fig. 4.32; Pl. 29), which consists of a septum edge with one of the short sides complete and not fragmentary (like the other one), suggest the existence of an additional typology of rectangular basin with central septum opened on one side.

Furthermore, this specimen is also the only one with a plastic decoration, represented by a pellet, a very unusual feature in coarse ware. Simple trays are generally undecorated, while those with a central septum are red slipped. One characteristic common to all the pieces of any type is the impression of wattle, cloth and fig leaves indicating a specific manufacturing process for this shape which probably took place on a worktop covered with those materials.

The functions of the simple tray and the tray with a central septum must have differed. Thick walls, a coarse fabric and the remarkable dimensions of the simple trays (mouth width from 30 to 49 cm) seem to imply that they were used for some kind of hand-crafting. In particular, the bases with protruding edges were clearly aimed to increase the support area of the vessels; this can be taken to suggest that something was squeezed inside them, perhaps olives or grapes.

The need to have two contiguous spaces within the same vessel, together with simpler morphology inform us about a different aim for trays with central septum, like for example dyeing activities.

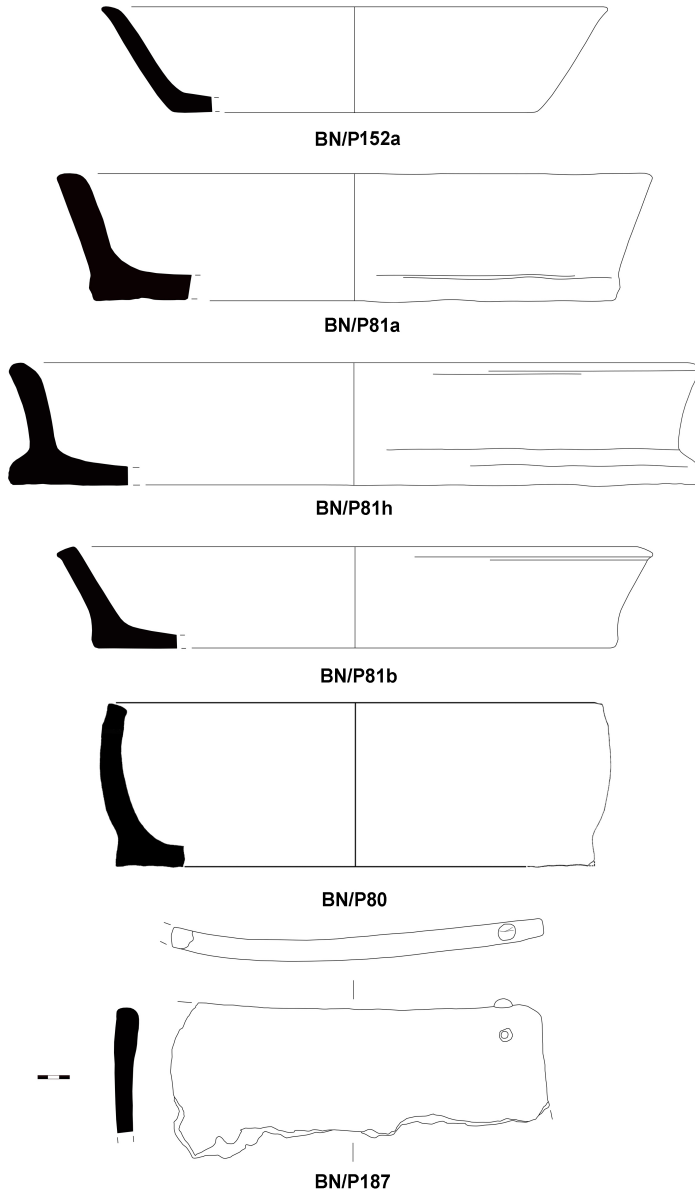


Figure 4.32. Trays of type 1: BN/P152a; type 2A: BN/P81a; type 2B: BN/81h; type 2c: BN/P81b; type 3: BN/P80 (drawings by Denise Cali); Type 4: BN/P187.

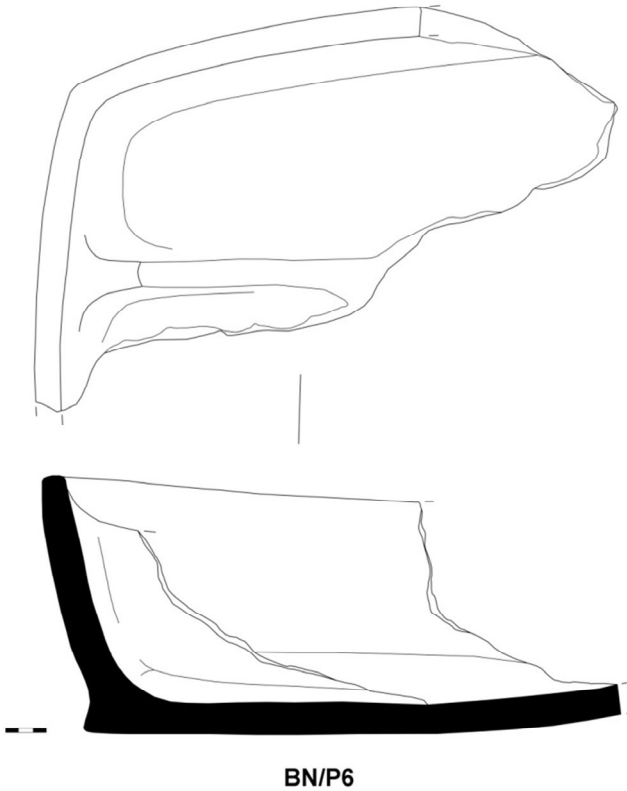


Figure 4.33. Tray of type 4: BN/P6.

Although their decoration (red slip and plastic applications) could suggest a more ‘noble use’ for these vessels, maybe connected with ritual performances, this is conjectural.

Trays are, in fact, a rather novel shape for the Borg in-Nadur phase repertoire with few examples known. Type 1 matches the unpublished example MRD64/P/130 from Ghar Mirdum, provided with a vertical loop handle (Fig. 4.34).

Types 2A and 2B are represented by the unpublished specimen NNF/60/P/09/17 from In-Nuffara which presents features common to both sub-types (Fig. 4.34).

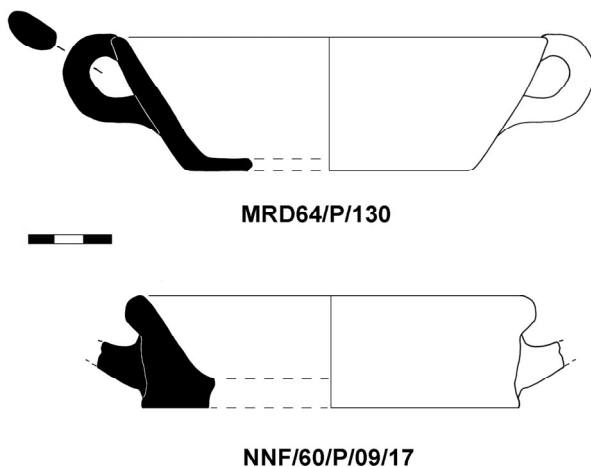


Figure 4.34. Tray of type 1 from Ghar Mirdum; tray type 2A/2B from In-Nuffara (drawings by Denise Cali and Carlo Veca).

Furthermore, type 2B is comparable with the shallow tray 1039/52 from Tas-Silġ, which Sagona claims to belong to Melita Phase I (1000-750 BC) of her chronological chart¹⁰³.

Type 2C can be compared with the vessel P35b from Mtarfa¹⁰⁴ and is strikingly similar to 1043/144 from Tas-Silġ and has been dated to the same phase¹⁰⁵. Type 3 is still without comparisons, while type 4 can be compared with some similar pieces recently identified in the Sicilian site of Monte San Paolillo near Catania¹⁰⁶.

A significant element that must be remarked is the absence of other trays with a central septum besides those from Borg in-Nadur. During my survey of the pottery from the pit at In-Nuffara, 88 specimens of rectangular (simple) trays were found but not one belonged to that typology.

¹⁰³ Sagona 2008: 500, 506, 527, fig. 15.7.

¹⁰⁴ Sagona 1999: 56, fig. 7.

¹⁰⁵ Sagona 2008: 506, 527, fig. 15.6.

¹⁰⁶ Tanasi 2010b.

Cooking pots

Cooking pots are the hardest class to be analysed for two main reasons: the very wide morphological variety and the extreme fragility brought about by being subjected to heat continuously. Among the less fragmentary pieces from the Borg in-Nadur temple, it was possible to distinguish six different types, four of which could be further divided in two sub-types: 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 5A, 5B.

Type 1A (BN/P157): globular body with slightly everted indistinct rounded rim; couple of vertical strap handle on the shoulder; undecorated (Fig. 4.35; Pl. 25).

Type 1B (BN/P50): ovoid body with rim curved inward and everted lip with quadrangular section; couple of vertical strap handle on the shoulder; plastic rope bands in relief (Fig. 4.35, Pl. 13).

Type 2A (BN/P109): conical body with indistinct rounded rim curved inward; couple of large and rough arch-shaped lug handles below the rim; undecorated (Fig. 4.35; Pl. 19).

Type 2B (BN/P177): ovoid body with indistinct rim curved inward with quadrangular section; couple of large and rough arch-shaped lug handles below the rim; undecorated (Fig. 4.35; Pl. 29).

Type 3A (BN/P60): ovoid body, with indistinct thinned rim curved inward; couple of thin rope bands in relief below it, more decorative than functional (Fig. 4.35; Pl. 14).

Type 3B (BN/P134a): ovoid elongated body, with indistinct rounded rim curved inward; couple of thin rope bands in relief below it, more decorative than functional (Fig. 4.35; Pl. 20).

Type 4 (BRG/010/119; BN/P166): ovoid body with low distinct neck with concave profile and markedly everted rounded rim; undecorated (Fig. 4.35; Pls 4, 27).

Type 5A (BRG/010/116): low indistinct neck with straight indistinct rim with quadrangular section; cut out decoration (Fig. 4.36; Pl. 4).

Type 5B (BRG/010/109): low indistinct neck with indistinct rim with quadrangular section slightly everted; cut out decoration (Fig. 4.36; Pl. 4).

Type 6 (BRG/010/114, BRG/010/115): high indistinct neck with straight indistinct thinned rim; undecorated (Fig. 4.36; Pl. 4).

With the exception of specimen BN/P50, belonging to type 1B, all the other examples taken into consideration present clear traces of repeated exposure to heat after the initial firing. The absence of bases is caused by the fragility of that part of the body which was in touch with the flames.

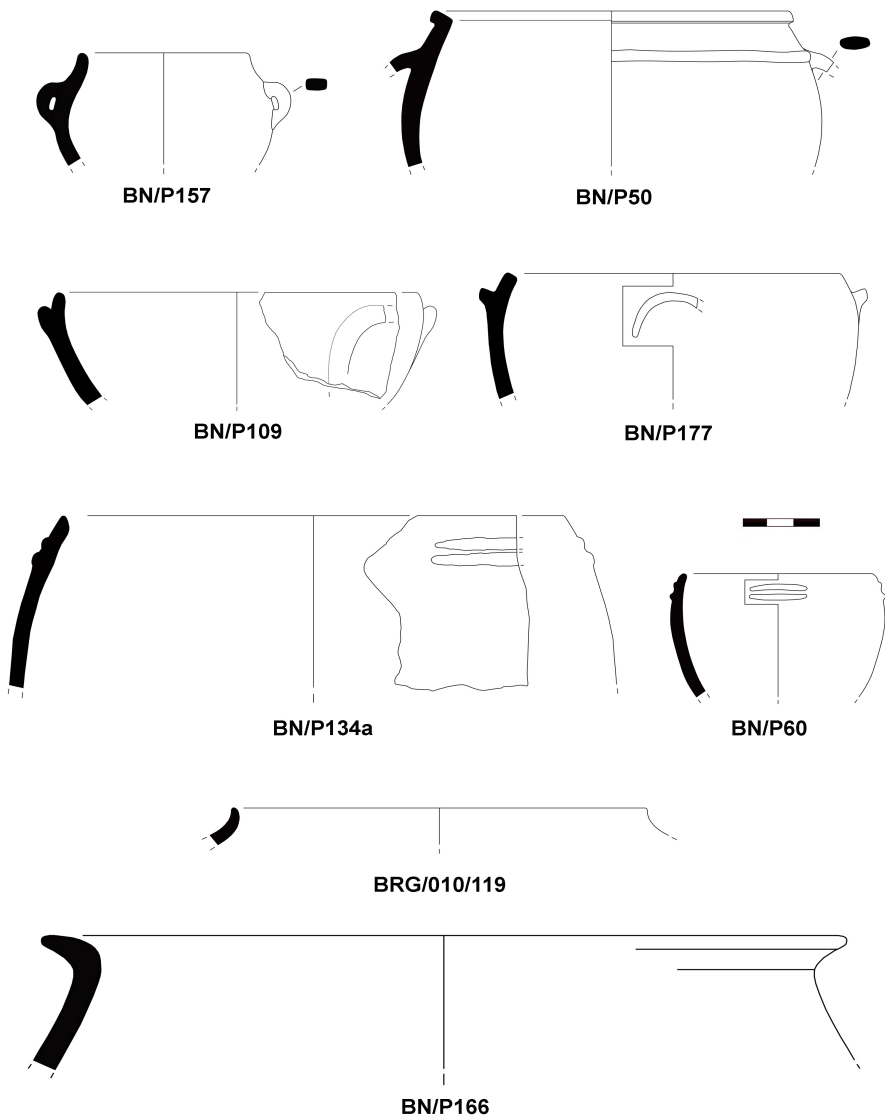


Figure 4.35. Cooking jars of type 1A: BN/P157; type 1B: BN/P50; type 2A: BN/P109; type 2B: BN/P177; type 3A: BN/P60; type 3B: BN/P134a; type 4: BRG/010/119, BN/P166.

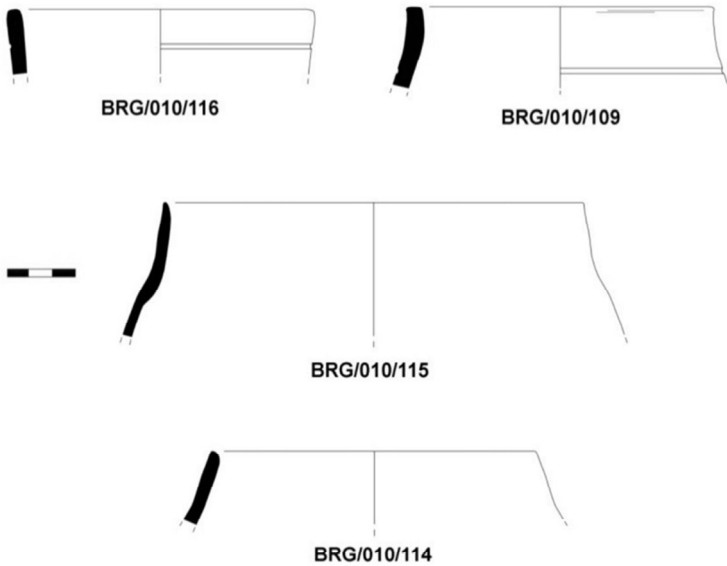


Figure 4.36. Cooking jars of type 5A: BRG/010/116; type 5B: BRG/010/109; type 6: BRG/010/115, BRG/010/114.

Their dimensions show a range of rim diameter from 12 to 44 cm, with the large ones suggesting that they probably acted as cauldrons. Due to their fragmentary state it is not possible to say more about their use other than that they were placed on small *focula* for cooking.

Unfortunately no comparisons for the cooking pots being published here can be found in the available documentation. Only one match for BN/P177 comes from the Ghar Dalam site¹⁰⁷.

Storage jars

The discovery of some pieces of large storage jars in the temple is a significant datum that will allow us to interpret how the site was used (see below). At least seven different pieces were identified.

¹⁰⁷ Ashby and Despott 1916: fig. 1.9.

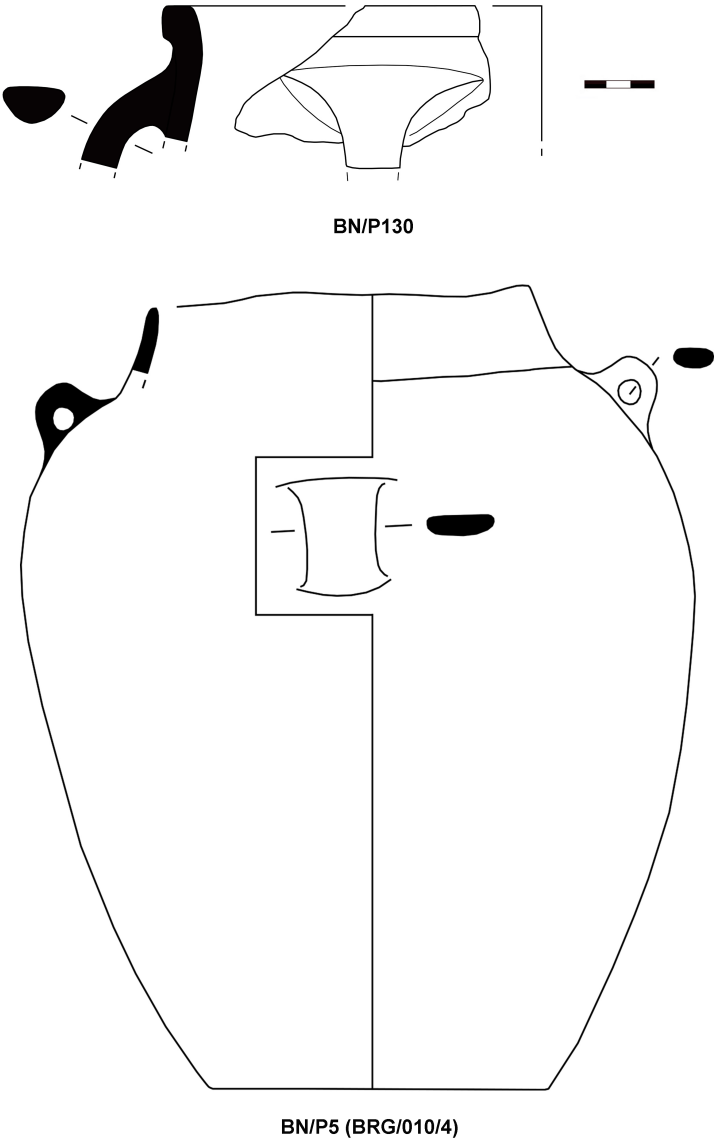


Figure 4.37. Storage jar type 1: BN/P103; type 2:BN/P5 (BRG/010/4)

Four bases (BRG/010/48, BRG/010/54, BN/P172a, BN/P172b) (Pls 2, 28), one fragment of a neck with rim (BN/P130) (Fig. 4.37; Pl. 20), one handle BN/P77 (Pl. 15), and the entire jar BN/P5 (Fig. 4.37; Pl. 5) were found.

Furthermore, in Box 199, many wall sherds were found belong to other storage jars. For some pieces Murray also provided the findspot: BN/P5 at the entrance of the SE apse of the Sanctuary, BRG/010/48 in the ‘West Sanctuary’ (which effectively means in the SW or NW apses), and BN/P130 in the Open Area¹⁰⁸.

Regarding the typology, two types can be distinguished.

Type 1 (BN/P130): distinct rim with thickened projecting lip with quadrangular section with vertical strap handle set right below it (Fig. 4.37; Pl. 20).

Type 2 BN/P5 (BRG/010/4): ovoid body, low distinct neck with straight indistinct thinned rim; flat indistinct base; two pairs of vertical strap handles, two set in the shoulder and two on the point of maximum expansion of the body; red slipped and burnished surfaces (Fig. 4.37; Pl. 5).

Type 2 corresponds to the shape used by Evans as an archetype for Evans 104¹⁰⁹. Handle BN/P77 seems to belong to type 1. Since bases of type 1 are unknown, the four indistinct flat bases can easily belong to either type 1 or type 2.

Comparing the dimensions of type 2 (height 54 cm, rim diameter 20 cm, base diameter 23 cm) with other fragmentary pieces, it seems to represent the dimensional standard for the storage jars used in the temple area.

Given their features, they were not suited for being transported but to be set in storage facilities for containing dry or liquid substances. The absence of lids suitable for covering these jars suggests that they were probably closed with a lid made of perishable material.

Regarding the parallels for the types, during my survey of the Ghar Mirdum pottery, four fragmentary large storage jars were identified (Box 253, 252, 250); unfortunately it was not possible to establish the shape without proper restoration of the pieces. One neck belonging to storage jar of type 2 (MRD64/P/941) was also found. Among the material from In-Nuffara, 149 sherds belonging to at least five storage jars were also noted.

¹⁰⁸ Murray 1925: 33-34.

¹⁰⁹ Evans 1953: 70-71, fig. 11.

Lamps

Lamps are rather uncommon in the Maltese Middle Bronze Age pottery repertoire. The two examples known from Borg in-Nadur became the archetypes in Evans' classification. Specimen BN/P11 (Evans 98)¹¹⁰ can be identified as type 1, while BN/P10 (Evans 97)¹¹¹ is distinguishable as type 2. However, it must be pointed out that the piece we are claiming to belong to type 2 matches, in fact, the description provided by Evans but not the shape of the archetype as drawn.

Type 1 (BN/P11): low dish with indistinct flat base; indistinct everted thinned rim; vertical strap handle slightly curved downward below the base level; undecorated (Fig. 4.38; Pl. 5).

Type 2 (BN/P10): shallow conical cup, with indistinct everted rim with quadrangular section; hollow low conical foot with indistinct edges; vertical strap handle; undecorated (Fig. 4.38; Pl. 5).

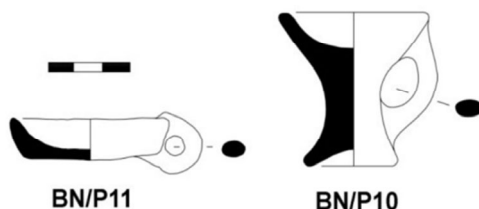


Figure 4.38. Lamp of type 1: BN/P11; type 2: BN/P10.

As for the use, it is clear that the two types were aimed to fulfill the same function, that of holding small flames, probably fuelled by oil or animal fat. But while type 1 can stand on a specific edged surface or stand because of the handle, type 2 can be easily set on different surfaces.

Regarding parallels, while type 1 is without comparisons, type 2 matches GD/P1 from Għar Dalam¹¹² and the unpublished piece MRD64/P/17 from Għar Mirdum (Fig. 4.39). Outside the Maltese archipelago, a similar vessel comes from tomb 1 at Thapsos¹¹³.

¹¹⁰ Evans 1953: 70-71, fig. 11.

¹¹¹ Evans 1953: 70-71, fig. 11.

¹¹² Evans 1971: 20, pl. 32.10.

¹¹³ Orsi 1895: coll. 96-97, fig. 3.

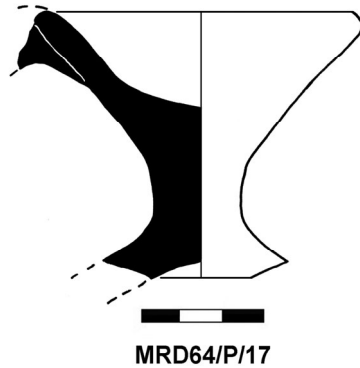


Figure 4.39: Lamp of type 1 from Ghar Mirdum (1:2, drawing by Denise Cali and Carlo Veca).

Lids

Lids are noteworthy for their scarcity in the assemblage. Only three fragments were identified which can be said to belong to two types, 1 and 2.

Type 1 (BN/P73, BN/P153): discoid lid with a slight concave profile with indistinct thinned edges, sometimes with quadrangular section; radial rope bands set on the upper surface (Fig. 4.40; Pl. 15, 25).

Type 2 (BN/P208): discoid lid with a slight concave profile with surmounting loop handle set in the middle of the upper surface; undecorated (Pl. 31).

The fragmentary conditions of the type 1 example prevent us from assessing if they also had or not a surmounting loop handle. The typological distinction in this case is based on the difference in decoration.

The size of the lids of type 1, with a diameter ranging between 22-24 cm, seems to fit only the amphoras; they are clearly smaller than the rim diameters of storage jars.

Type 1 finds a close match in the unpublished example NNF60/P/09/18 from In-Nuffara (Fig. 4.41) and in morphological terms recalls lids P4b and P4c from Mtarfa¹¹⁴. Type 2 could

¹¹⁴ Sagona 1999: 54, fig. 6.1, 6.8.

probably be compared with specimen P18 from Mtarfa¹¹⁵ or better still with lid B/P7 from Bahrija¹¹⁶.

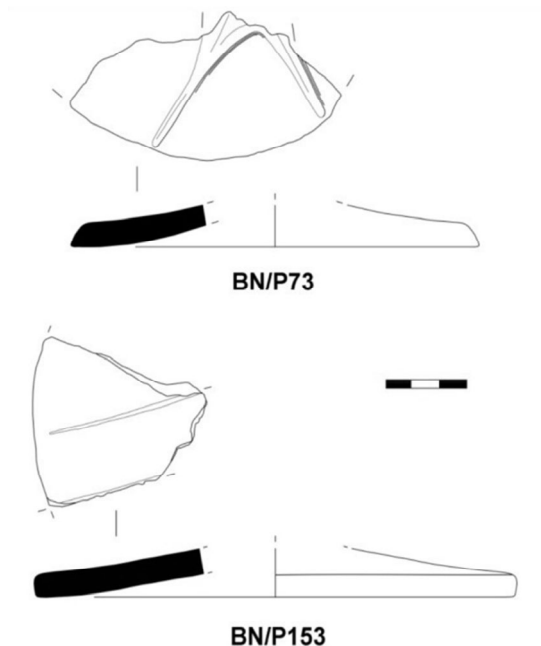


Figure 4.40. Lids of type 1: BN/P153, BN/P73.

Varia

Besides pottery, other significant – but problematic – clay objects were found amongst the material coming from the temple. The first one is represented by three sherds clearly belonging to the same object (BRG/010/94a-c) but having no joins (Fig. 4.42; Pl. 3).

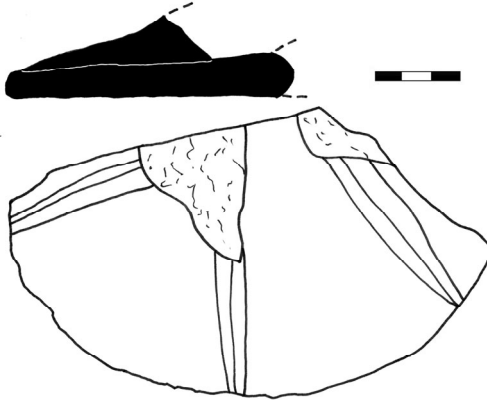
One of them was published by Murray¹¹⁷ who provided this description: ‘a flat sherd of a peculiar kind of pottery, of which Peet found a fragment at Bahrija. It can only be described as semi-

¹¹⁵ Sagona 1999: 55, fig. 6.6.

¹¹⁶ Evans 1971: fig. 11.5.

¹¹⁷ Murray 1925: 26.

perforated, for the holes are on one side only of the pottery and are not pierced through; until a more or less complete vessel of this ware is found, the use of it must be conjectural.’



NNF60/P/09/18

Figure 4.41. Lid of type 1 from In-Nuffara (Drawing by Denise Cali and Carlo Veca).

These pieces have a very rough and fragile gritted fabric and seem to be misfired or else were originally sundried. Less than 0.5 cm thick, they have one flat side with irregular and unclear impressions, as if they were set on something; the other side is covered by rough, pierced spheres. The flat side presents also ferrous brown blotches which are hard to interpret. The assignment of these specimens to the Middle Bronze Age is supported by the identification of identical pieces from Bahrija¹¹⁸ and from the sealed deposit of In-Nuffara¹¹⁹, dated to the Borg in-Nadur phase. A possible interpretation for this object is that it was a kind of clay render maybe used for covering earth or stone structures.

¹¹⁸ Peet 1910: 159, pl. 15.53.

¹¹⁹ 4 fragments in 'In-Nuffara' Box 6.

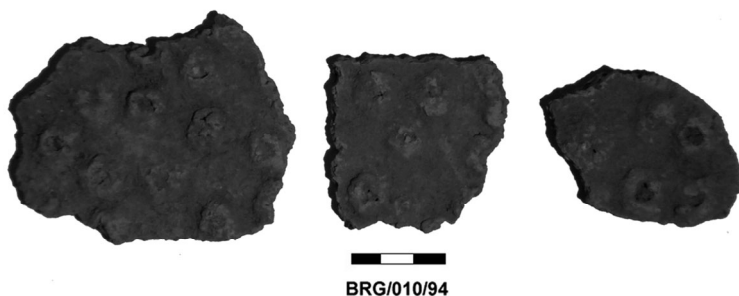


Figure 4.42. Fragments of clay render BRG/010/94a-c.

The second object (BNP/85) is a kind of discoid termination with edges distinguished by a groove, which shows on the lower part signs of two attachments (Fig. 4.43,1; Pl. 17).

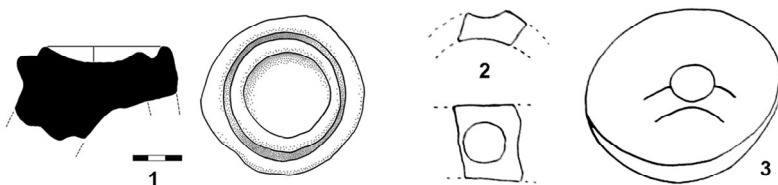


Figure 4.43. 1) Discoid termination BN/P85 (1:4, drawing Denise Cali); 2) Specimen from Capo Graziano layers of Lipari's Castle (Bernabò Brea 1985: 80, fig. 63d) 3) Basin with internal bridge from Volimidia (Bernabò Brea 1985: 80, fig. 65b).

It is not clear if this piece can be related to a clay figurine or model of some kind or if it was a handle termination. Its morphology does not fit with any type of artefact known to me from this period, while its assignment to the Borg in-Nadur phase is certain as testified by its typical red crackled slip. It is possible that it could belong to a basin with an internal bridge (*scodellone tronco-conico con ponticello interno*) similar to those present in the Aeolian archipelago and in the Aegean in the Early and Middle Bronze Age¹²⁰ (Fig. 4.43, 2-3).

¹²⁰ Bernabò Brea 1985: 79-80, figs 63d, 65b.

4.4.3. Towards a chrono-typological sequence of the Borġ in-Nadur phase pottery

The overall analysis of the major pottery types broadens our knowledge of the variety that exists in the Borġ in-Nadur repertoire. Once the typological sequence is completed the next step is to provide chronological references to anchor it, or at least parts of it, in a temporal framework for the Middle Bronze Age.

The first reference could come from the identity between fabrics 1 and 2, which we identified, and Trump's phases II B1 and II B2. In the documentation available for this period, largely characterised by de-contextualized materials, the only certainty is represented by the stratigraphic sequence of the village at Borġ in-Nadur as noted by Trump. Despite inconclusive attempts to reinterpret the sequence he produced¹²¹, the recent reappraisal of the stratigraphy observed by him¹²² has clearly demonstrated that there was a succession between layers with cultural material belonging to II B1 and layers with material belonging to II B2. A preliminary survey of the material coming from the village supports further Trump's conclusions; the results of this exercise will be published separately. This means that wares connected to those two phases were chronologically distinguishable and were *not* the outcome of different workshops producing pottery at the same time. However, it does not mean that pottery types of II B1 could not also be typical of II B2 since the two phases belong to the homogeneous cultural phenomenon represented by the Borġ in-Nadur *facies*.

In this perspective, while we wait for new data from the stratigraphic excavations at Tas-Silġ (north and south enclosures), Trump's chronological classification remains the more reliable one. Having made this point, it is possible to use different fabrics as a chronological discrimination criterion for the typologies

Table 4.3 shows all types and sub-types identified divided on base of the fabric 1/II B1 and fabric 2/II B2.

¹²¹ Sagona 2008.

¹²² See Vella *et al.*, this volume (chapter 3).

F.	TYPES								
	Cups / basins	Amphorae	Dipper cups	Trays	Jugs / juglets	Lamps	Beakers	Storage jars	Cooking pots
F. 1 II B1	3	-	1 2B	-	3B	1 2	1	-	-
F. 1 II B1 F. 2 II B2	1A 1B 1C 2B	1A 2A	2A 3	-	-	-	2	-	-
F. 2 II B2	2A 2C 4	1B 1C 2B	-	1 4	1 2A 2B 3A 3C	-	4	2	2A 2B 3A 3B 4 5A 5B 6

Table 4.3. Comparative chart of typological categories characterised by the presence of fabrics (1 and 2) (F = Fabric).

To each typological category correspond types exclusive to fabric 1, types shared between fabric 1 and fabric 2, and types exclusive to fabric 2. From this visual summary, it is possible to better characterise the pottery repertoires of II B1 and II B2 going beyond the simple list of shapes and features provided by Trump¹²³. The numerous typologies shared by the two fabrics point to the existence of a cultural continuity between II B1 and II B2 with a reasonable transitional period during which the repertoire was slowly updated.

Since decoration is used by Trump as a criterion to discriminate between II B1 and II B2, it is useful to emphasise here the relationship between fabrics 1 and 2 and the decorative techniques occurring in the material we have selected for study. Regarding the identification of fabrics 1 and 2 with phases II B1 and II B2 respectively, it can be observed that, moving from II B1 to II B2,

¹²³ Trump 1961.

there is a gradual decrease of cut out decoration and a general increase of incision, plastic applications and white inlay (Fig. 4.44). The low occurrence of impressed decoration fits well with phases II B1 and II B2, since it became common later in phase II B3, which in our data set is hardly represented. Again this evidence sustains the reconstruction of the features characterising pottery production in each of the three phases as put forward by Trump. Furthermore, the exclusive presence or indeed absence in the two phases of some typological categories or of single types/sub-types could provide significant information about the different use and exploitation of the temple area. It could also provide us with data regarding traditional customs and cultural innovations connected to the use of pottery.

The continuity noticed in the use of cups, basins, amphoras, dipper cups and beakers indicates that the activity performed in the temple did not change substantially. But the appearance of trays, storage jars and cooking pots in II B2, together with the abandonment of lamps and the multiplication of typological varieties of jugs and juglets are clear indicators of something new.

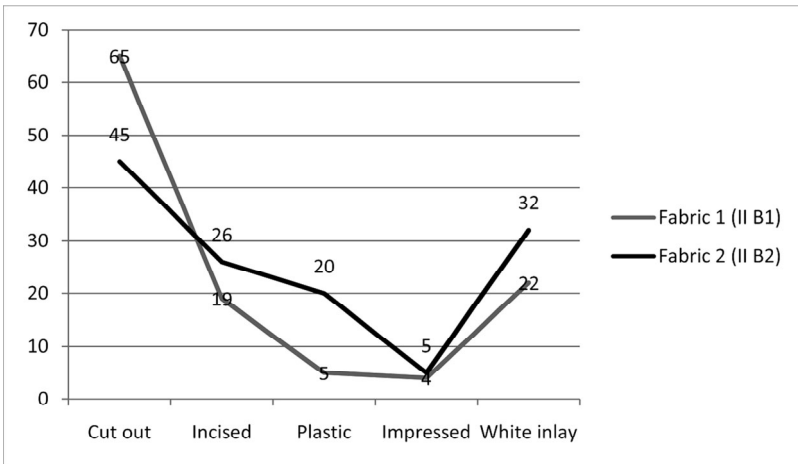


Figure 4.44. Comparative graph expressing the quantity of examples of fabrics 1 and 2 with cut out, incised, impressed decoration, plastic applications and white inlay.

The second chronological reference point is represented by the cross dating with other well known cultural contexts in which Borg in-Nadur pottery (or to be precise, what elsewhere we have called Borg in-Nadur-type pottery) has been found, namely Sicily. But before we move on, some clarifications are called for.

It is very important to remember that the chronological system currently available for prehistoric Sicily, particularly the most common one on which I rely (Table 1.1)¹²⁴, makes it clear that the Sicilian sequence is different from that of southern Italy. For the Sicilian Middle Bronze Age, in particular its most significant site Thapsos, two different hypotheses have been offered by scholars over the last two decades. The first one by Luigi Bernabò Brea was based on a careful analysis of all the material coming from Orsi's excavations and held at the museum of Siracusa. He proposed the first culture sequence for Sicilian prehistory, which is still considered the standard yardstick in relative terms. The second one was put forth between the 1970s and 1980s in a number of preliminary reports published by Giuseppe Voza, the excavator of the settlement at Thapsos.

Without going into the detail which has been debated several times in the scholarly literature, it is possible to summarise the main points by paraphrasing the thoughts expressed by La Rosa in a seminal work¹²⁵. Bernabò Brea dated the Middle Bronze Age which he called the Thapsos culture to the period between the mid-15th and mid-13th century BC. This was followed by a Late Bronze Age called North Pantalica culture which lasted from the mid-13th to mid-11th century BC. Since the evidence from Thapsos showed only features belonging to the Middle Bronze Age and not to the Late Bronze Age, Bernabò Brea suggested that during the Late Bronze Age the site was abandoned. On the other hand, Voza identified three architectural phases on the basis of the Thapsos stratigraphy. The first and the second one had features typical of the Middle Bronze Age and the third one was related to a later reoccupation of the area in the Early Iron Age. The absence of elements connected with the North Pantalica culture, allowed Voza

¹²⁴ See Tanasi and Vella, this volume (chapter 1).

¹²⁵ La Rosa 1989.

to affirm that the Thapsos culture belonged to the Middle and Late Bronze Age, lasting without interruption from the mid-15th to the mid-11th century, and that North Pantalica was not a culture but simply an isolated pottery style. However, whereas Bernabò Brea provided incontrovertible data coming from the stratification he noted when he excavated at Pantalica to make his case, Voza's hypothesis cannot be checked because the results of his excavations have only been published in the most preliminary of manners with no supporting data. Thus, generally Bernabò Brea's culture sequence is the most widely accepted.

More recently, Alberti produced new data which sustains Bernabò Brea's sequence¹²⁶. He has proposed a distinction in three sub-phases for the Middle Bronze Age, which he labelled Thapsos I, II and III, and pegged these to two phases of the Aeolian Milazzese culture (Table 1.1), basing himself on a meticulous typological analysis of local pottery found in association with Mycenaean vessels in a few untouched contexts. Alberti's proposed sequence has been widely accepted and it is the one to which we refer until new evidence is forthcoming.

After this *caveat* we return to our case. By referring to Alberti's chronological division for the Thapsos culture and to a previous work in which Borg in-Nadur-type pottery found in Sicilian contexts was also dated¹²⁷, we can highlight what follows.

Cups/basins of types 1A, 1B, 1C (related to the transitional phase between II B1 and II B2) and of type 2 (related to II B2), and trays of type 4, together with jugs/juglets of types 2A and 3A (related also to II B2): these all have parallels in Sicilian contexts dated to Thapsos II (1440/1380-1310/1300 BC). This datum provides us with a reliable chronological anchor for the typological sequence that has been presented here.

As far as Trump's II B3 phase is concerned, as previously stated, the fabric 4 we identified earlier (which corresponds to wares of phase II B3) occurs on just three specimens (BN/P100, BN/P155, BN/P157), of which only BN/P100, a dipper cup of type 3, is clearly recognisable. Other materials published by Murray and

¹²⁶ Alberti 2004; Alberti 2006; Alberti 2007; Alberti 2008.

¹²⁷ Tanasi 2008.

related to phase II B3, that I could not find during the survey at the Museum, were probably lost¹²⁸.

The scarcity of II B3 material is particularly significant as it highlights a reconfiguration of the temple area if not its partial abandonment. The preliminary survey of the pottery coming from the exploration of the village points to a certain abundance of II B3 pottery, something already noted by Trump¹²⁹.

Unfortunately, the semi-fine and coarse fabrics 4 and 5 cannot provide further chronological data since they were not discussed in the other literature. But to point out for the first time the existence of such a production, which is rather specialised (especially for storage jars), in the Borg in-Nadur pottery repertoire is a significant discovery which will undoubtedly provide more information about pottery technology when it will be possible to carry out archaeometric analysis on the pottery.

4.5 Foreign imports

In addition to local pottery, foreign imports of different origin and chronology were identified and studied. New significant data about the Mycenaean sherd (Figs 4.45, 4.46; Pl. 5) found to the south of Chapel A during the excavations of 1926-1927¹³⁰, were added.

The sherd was identified for the first time by Evans in 1953 who stated that it was 'part of the rim of a kylix painted with a stylised octopus pattern and the style shows that it probably belongs to the L.H. IIIB period'¹³¹. Evans also provided a reconstruction drawing of the original shape¹³². In his later publication of 1971, a brief description of the sherd, labelled BN/P7, confirmed the previous interpretation¹³³. This position remained unchanged in later publications¹³⁴, until it was recently criticised by Blakolmer who

¹²⁸ Murray 1923: pl. 12,97-101; Murray 1925: pls 13,124, 20,208; Murray 1929: pl. 25,262.

¹²⁹ Trump 1961.

¹³⁰ Murray 1929: 16, pl. 20,1.

¹³¹ Evans 1953: 72, pl. 24,1-2.

¹³² Evans 1953: pl. 14,1-2.

¹³³ Evans 1971: 17, fig. 42, pl. 32,6.

¹³⁴ Trump 2002: 292; Stampolidis 2003: 282, no. 224; Pace 2004: 212.

disagreed with Evans' reconstruction and analysis and instead defined the piece as 'part of a decorated Mycenaean kylix or cup to be dated somewhere in Late Helladic IIIA2 or IIIB1'¹³⁵. No further attempts to identify better BN/P7 and specify precisely the type of shape and motif represented were carried out since then.



Figure 4.45. Mycenaean kylix BN/P7, reconstruction drawing (Evans 1953).

In the recent reappraisal of the pottery coming from the Borg in-Nadur temple, a new drawing and visual analysis of the sherd led to a more precise interpretation.

BN/P7

H. 3.8, Ø 15.5, th. 0.3 cm

Indistinct everted rounded rim, on which is preserved the attachment of a handle. Painted band on the inner and outer part of the rim; on external surface, below the rim, curved line with diagonal line at the end in correspondence of the handle's attachment. Surface: 7.5 YR 8/6 reddish yellow; slip: 7.5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow; paint: 2.5 YR 5/8 red. Wheel made. FS 258, kylix; FM 21(12), octopus below the handle; LH IIIB.

¹³⁵ Blakolmer 2005: 658.

As it clearly seen in the drawing, the curved line which was interpreted as one tentacle of the octopus ends where the handle was attached. This means that the octopus was not set in the frontal part of the vessel but on one of the sides. In this scenario, the interpretation provided by Evans remains substantially correct but the reconstruction drawing must be rejected.

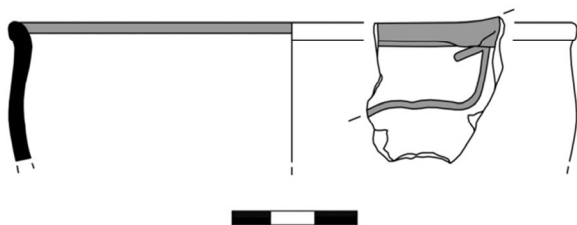


Figure 4.46. Mycenaean kylix BN/P7 (1:2).

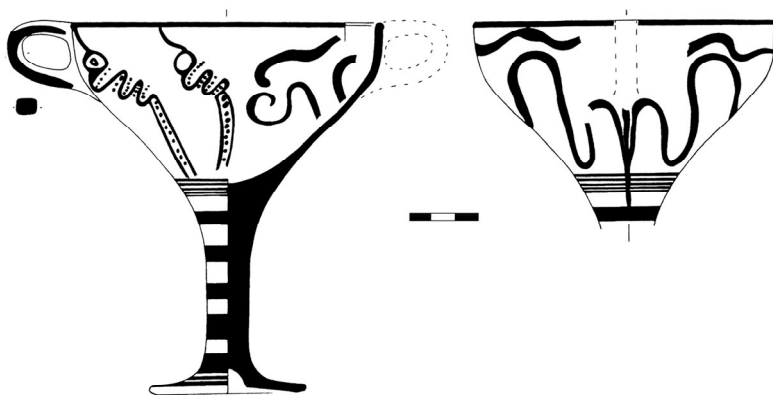


Figure 4.47. Mycenaean kylix from Phylakopi, Melos (Mountjoy 1999).

The shape must correspond to Furumark's 'Form 79 stemmed cup - FS 258 kylix'¹³⁶, while the fragmentary decorative motif corresponds to Furumark's FM 21(12)¹³⁷ 'octopus below the handle';

¹³⁶ Furumark 1992: pl. 142.

¹³⁷ Furumark 1941: fig. 49.

in our vessel it was the secondary decorative motif, located on one side. The best comparison for BN/P7 is a kylix from Phylakopi on the island of Melos, dated to LH IIIB, in which two different motifs are set in correspondence of the sides, namely FM 23 (whorl-shell) and FM 21 (octopus)¹³⁸ (Fig. 4.47).

Another significant piece is the rim sherd BN/P129 (Figs 4.48, 4.49; Pl. 20), which is one of the many sherds not described by Murray. Reviewed by Evans during his analysis of material from Borg in-Nadur carried out in 1952, the piece was described in the inventory sheet as a ‘painted sherd of bowl with everted rim’ but it was never discussed in his publications.



Figure 4.48. Kalathos BN/P129 (photograph by the author).

BN/P 129

H. 1.8; Ø 19; th. 0.4 cm.

Distinct markedly everted rounded lip. Painted decoration: band in the outer part of the rim and on the upper part of the lip, a second parallel band below it; on the lip continuous zig-zag motif; inside, below the rim, horizontal band. Surface: 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow; self slip 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow; paint 2.5 YR 4/2 weak red. Wheel made. Very hard fabric without grits.

The high technical quality of the sherd, testified by its hard fabric made from well levigated clay, use of the potter’s wheel and painted decoration with geometric pattern suggests to me that this piece was not produced locally. These technical qualities exclude Sicily too as the origin of the sherd; besides, decoration and shape are not at home in Sicilian prehistoric pottery repertoires.

¹³⁸ Mountjoy 1999: 911, n. 110.

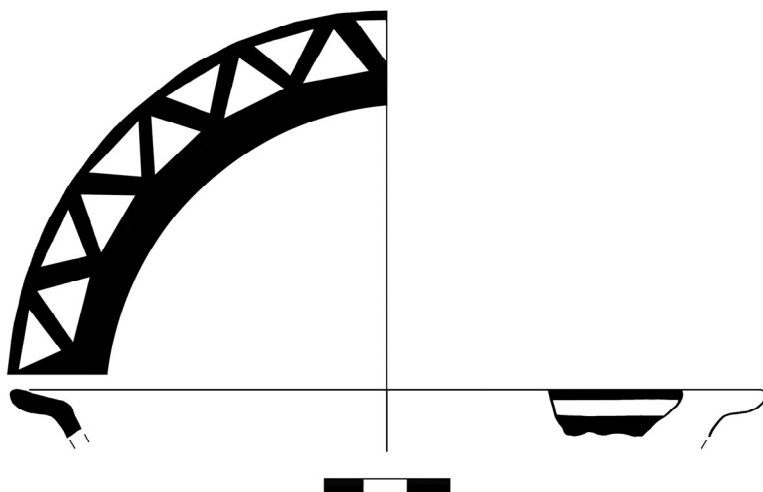


Figure 4.49. Kalathos BN/P129 (1:2, drawing by Denise Cali).

A close visual analysis coupled with the drawn record of the piece provided new data to allow me to interpret this sherd as belonging to a kalathos imported from Crete¹³⁹. In fact, striking matches for BN/P129 are represented by the kalathos D07/2007 recently found at Patela of Prinias¹⁴⁰ (Fig. 4.50) dated to Early Geometric (820-800 BC), and by a second example coming from the excavations in the Geometric levels of Phaistos¹⁴¹, both sites set in the Messara Plain in southern-central Crete.

Kalathoi of the same type and chronology have been found in other sites in the surroundings of Phaistos¹⁴² and at the nearby site of Petrokephali¹⁴³. In addition, the peculiar decorative zig-zag motif on the lip is rather common on kalathoi produced in eastern Crete between Protogeometric B and Early Geometric¹⁴⁴. While only

¹³⁹ Tanasi 2009.

¹⁴⁰ Palermo *et al.* 2008: 179-208; Tanasi 2009: 537, fig. 5.

¹⁴¹ Rocchetti 1974-1975: 273, fig. 148, top left.

¹⁴² Rocchetti 1969-1970: 42-43, figs 3a, 3b and pp. 51-52, figs 14,1-2 and 15,1-2.

¹⁴³ Rocchetti 1969: 181-209.

¹⁴⁴ Tsipopoulou and Karetsou 2005: 456-458.

archaeometric analyses can determine scientifically the provenance of sherd BN/P129, the hypothesis that it could be an import from Crete seems to be more than reasonable.

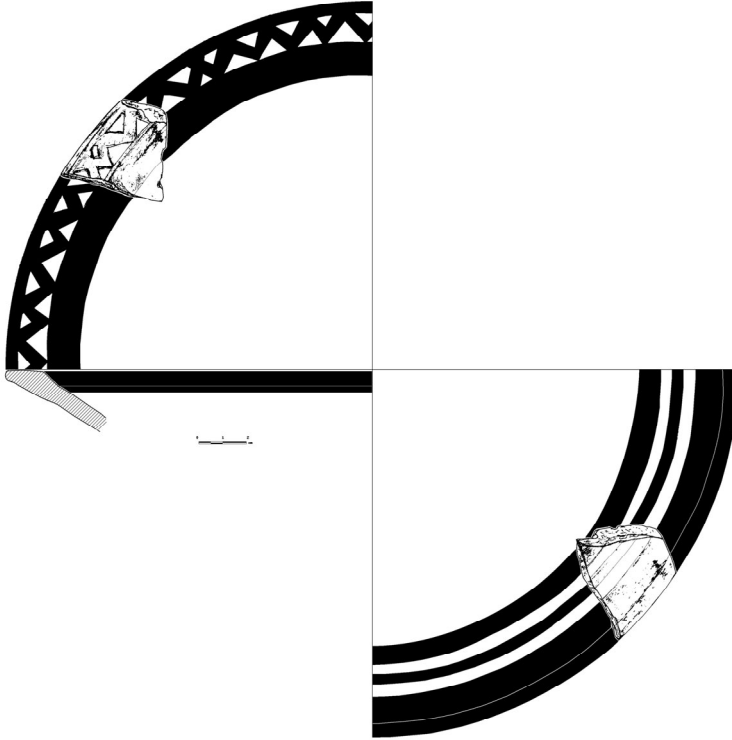


Figure 4.50. Kalathos D07/2007 from Patela of Prinias (Tanasi 2009).

A third problematic finding is represented by the body sherd BRG/010/43 (Fig. 4.51; Pl. 2) marked ‘Doorway UT’. It was found under the *torba* layer by the great entrance to the forecourt open in the megalithic wall, during the excavations of 1923. According to Zammit’s stratigraphic sequence, established at Tarxien, whereby the material coming from below *torba* layers ought to be Neolithic¹⁴⁵, Murray presented this specimen as Neolithic although its features

¹⁴⁵ Murray 1925: 22.

did not fit that repertoire: ‘This tiny piece is clearly of Neolithic ware from its fineness. Rectangular designs are not common at this period’¹⁴⁶. In 1952, Evans did not include it in his inventory and the piece remained unpublished.



Figure 4.51. Body sherd BRG/010/43 (photograph by the author).

BRG/010/43

H. 2.7; w. 3; th. 0.4 cm.

Wall sherd of a medium size closed vessel. Painted and incised decoration: Completely painted externally with the exception of a roughly incised motif with a hatched band (meander?). Surface: 10 YR 7/4 very pale brown; slip: 7.5 YR 6/a light brown; paint: 2.5 YR 3/1 dark reddish gray. Wheel made. Very hard fabric without grits.

With its fabric, painted and incised decoration, the sherd does not belong to the Maltese Neolithic pottery repertoire; neither does it fit in with the local Bronze Age pottery production. Indeed, it is difficult to find comparisons for this sherd. The fabric seems compatible with Aegean production, and the decorative motif – hatched band or meander – are very popular in Attic Middle Geometric production¹⁴⁷. But the contentious bit lies in the fact that the hatched motif is incised while the surrounding surface of the sherd was painted. Impressed hatched meander designs can be found on a fenestrated stamp from Athens dated to the 8th century¹⁴⁸, and incised

¹⁴⁶ Murray 1925: 30, pl. 19,7.

¹⁴⁷ Coldstream 1968: 16-28, pls 3, n, 4, b.

¹⁴⁸ Brann 1962: 101, pl. 40,605.

hatched bands occur in the Attic ‘fine handmade incised ware’ lasting between Protogeometric and Middle Geometric I¹⁴⁹. Geometric pottery with both incised and painted decoration in the Aegean is hard to find. In this context, our piece could belong to other ‘peripheral’ areas influenced by Greek art and culture such as southern Italy and Sicily, but again the fine fabric and decorative peculiarities do not match the local production in these areas.

Given the lack of precise parallels, therefore, a hypothesis can be put forward – with due caution: potsherd BRG/010/43 could be a local imitation of a Geometric vessel made by an indigenous artisan, a hybrid product which marries local and foreign to produce an original piece. Conscious/unconscious misinterpretation of the archetypes during the process of imitation and ‘translation’ of decorative themes in local artistic language is, for example, well attested in peripheral areas of the Mycenaean world, such as at Lemnos¹⁵⁰ and Sicily¹⁵¹.

Other local imitations of Geometric artefacts, discussed at length elsewhere¹⁵², are the finial knobs from Bahrija (B/P1027a, B/P1027b, B/P182) which I recently suggested belong to the type of Cretan ‘conical lids with finial knobs’, common in Crete between Protogeometric B and Early Geometric and in particular in Knossian cemeteries¹⁵³. Another relevant example of hybridization is represented by the hut model BN/P75 from the Borg in-Nadur temple¹⁵⁴, which elsewhere I have suggested to be a formal imitation of a Cretan Geometric cylindrical model¹⁵⁵ but with the traditional red slipped Borg in-Nadur fabric¹⁵⁶.

The Mycenaean and Geometric material discussed here cannot be precise indicators of the period of occupation of the temple or indeed throw light on the chronological sequence of the Borg in-Nadur pottery repertoire and sequence since they are de-contextualised.

¹⁴⁹ Lord Smithson 1968: 103-109.

¹⁵⁰ Privitera 2005: pl. 49,f.

¹⁵¹ Tanasi 2005: pl. 128,b.

¹⁵² Tanasi 2009.

¹⁵³ Coldstream 1994: 112-118; Coldstream, Eiring and Forster 2001: 31-33.

¹⁵⁴ See Veca, this volume (chapter 7).

¹⁵⁵ Hägg 1990; Mersereau 1993; Petrakis 2006.

¹⁵⁶ Tanasi 2009.

Nevertheless, the Mycenaean kylix, together with other artefacts such as another Mycenaean sherd from Tas-Silġ¹⁵⁷, and the bronze items from several other Middle Bronze Age sites¹⁵⁸, inform us that Malta in some way participated in the Mycenaean commercial network which found in the coastal centres of eastern Sicily a convenient hub, as discussed elsewhere¹⁵⁹.

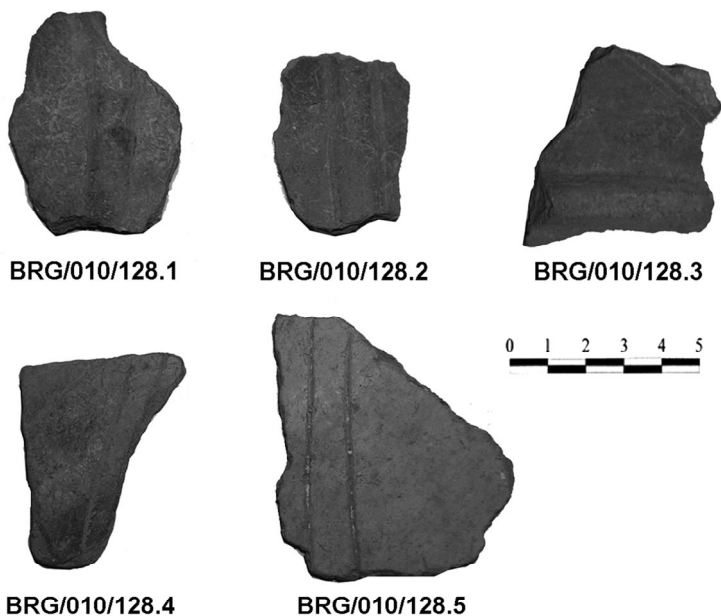


Figure 4.52. Thapsos potsherds from the Borġ in-Nadur temple (photograph by the author).

Therefore, the two Geometric sherds testify to a ‘relevant position’ of the temple area in II B3 phase, although it was rather abandoned, since no other material of the same chronology and provenance were hitherto known in the Maltese archipelago. In some way the ruins of the temple and the abandoned settlement still had a kind of social or religious meaning for the people living in the village. Those findings also disclose a new scenario, in which

¹⁵⁷ Sagona 2008: 505, fig. 6:1.

¹⁵⁸ Tanasi 2010a.

¹⁵⁹ Tanasi 2008; Tanasi 2010a.

Maltese communities prior to the permanent settlement of the Phoenicians on the islands, entertained relations with Aegean people or with foreign people carrying Aegean goods¹⁶⁰.

Another significant discovery consists of 42 handmade sherds (BRG/010/129.1-BRG/010/129.42) (Pl. 4) with a grey-brown burnished fabric containing *chamotte* and volcanic grit, with incised or applied decoration consisting of chevrons or rope-bands respectively. These were found amongst the material coming from the temple (Fig. 4.52; Pl. 4). Their features and especially the presence of volcanic grits, absent in Maltese prehistoric pottery, suggests that they are Middle Bronze Age Sicilian imports belonging to the Thapsos culture.

This suggestion finds support in the discovery of well preserved cups from Bahrija (28 sherds)¹⁶¹, and of another cup from In-Nuffara¹⁶², whose carinated profile (with incurving rim) finds a parallel in the production of pottery belonging to Thapsos phases II and III. In addition, Thapsos pottery has been recently identified in the northern enclosure of Tas-Silġ¹⁶³.

Although Thapsos sherds from Borg in-Nadur cannot be pinned down to type, it is reasonable to argue that their introduction was part of the same phenomenon which brought imports to Bahrija and In-Nuffara sometime during the transition between Thapsos II and III. In this case, we have further confirmation of the reciprocal relationship connecting Malta and Sicily in the passage between phases II B1 and II B2.

4.6. Provenance of materials and phases of occupation in the temple area

To provide the pottery with a spatial context in order to try and identify different phases of use (and re-use) of the temple area is a complicated task. Even though Murray went to great lengths to try and establish a stratigraphic sequence in her excavations, inspired by the results obtained by Zammit at Tarxien, the outcome was

¹⁶⁰ See Tanasi 2009.

¹⁶¹ Tanasi 2010a.

¹⁶² Tanasi and Vella forthcoming.

¹⁶³ Recchia and Cazzella forthcoming; pers. comm. Giulia Recchia 2010.

frustrating to say the least. In the circumstances, it is just possible to define macro-areas from where larger concentrations of Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery were reported. Moreover, it must be pointed out that modern re-use of the site, reported by Murray¹⁶⁴, could have significantly altered the stratification and horizontal distribution of artefacts.

North-West apse	North-East apse	Chapel B	Open Area
<p>‘Much Neolithic pottery was found in this apse, with a very little of the Bronze Age.’</p> <p>Murray 1923: 22.</p>	<p>‘In this apse the greater quantity of the pottery was of the Bronze Age.’</p> <p>Murray 1923: 23.</p>	<p>‘It was in this chapel that the greatest amount of Bronze Age pottery was found.’</p> <p>Murray 1929: 7.</p>	<p>‘Between the curved wall of the apsidal building and the outer wall of megaliths was an open area ... a considerable quantity of pottery was found, chiefly of the Bronze Age type.’</p> <p>Murray 1923: 31.</p>
Field stones	Outer trench	Forecourt	
<p>‘In the field to the north of the dolmen is an irregular line of stones curving to the east ... only Bronze Age pottery occurred both in it and in the upper levels.’</p> <p>Murray 1923: 32.</p>	<p>‘In the trench, which was cut round the outside of the sanctuary and which laid bare the stratification of the earth at that point, a number of Neolithic pottery were found.’</p> <p>Murray 1925: 24.</p>	<p>‘In the area marked 3 ... in the north-west angle between the south and east blocks was a mass of potsherds...most of the sherds were of soft Neolithic ware.’</p> <p>Murray 1923: 30.</p> <p>‘In the space ... marked SA on the plan ... Neolithic pottery in several varieties occurred under the pavement and one or two pieces of Bronze Age type.’</p> <p>Murray 1923: 31.</p>	

Table 4.4. Murray’s description of large concentrations of pottery in the principal areas of the megalithic remains at Borg in-Nadur.

¹⁶⁴ Murray 1925: 26; Murray 1929: 2, 5.

Taking into account Murray's references about the more significant pottery deposits (Table 4.4), it is possible to highlight some new data. Analysing Murray's report and leaving apart references to find spots for single objects, Tarxien phase pottery seems concentrated in the Sanctuary (her Apsidal building) and in particular in the North-West Apse. Furthermore, in the outer trench cut 'round the outside of the sanctuary' in order to establish the date of its construction, only Tarxien phase pottery was found. In addition, two areas with quantities of the same pottery were identified inside the Main Enclosure and specifically in the area labeled S.A.

As regards the Bronze Age pottery, three other areas of concentration can be observed, shown in Fig. 4.53. The first one is represented by the North-East Apse of the Apsidal Building, possibly also the South-East Apse since here the storage jar BN/P5 was found in situ, and the nearby Open Area, north-east of the Apsidal Building. The second concentration is located outside the main compound of the temple, in that area denoted Field Stones by the excavator. The third one, also outside the compound, is Chapel B (part of the Double Chapel) and the structures not built in megalithic technique south-west of it.

Those structures south-west of Chapel B are particularly significant because they constitute what the excavator considered the only building phase clearly distinguishable from the rest of the temple:

'At stone II a small wall came to light, touching the limiting wall, but without any connection with it. At right angles to this small wall was another wall built in the same manner of small squared blocks set on earth. Such a method of building is not of the Neolithic period, but belongs to the Bronze Age'¹⁶⁵.

This statement suggests that the re-use of the temple area was not characterised only by the occupation of still standing megalithic spaces but also by the construction of new structures, huts perhaps, close to those areas rearranged as shelters like, for instance, Chapel B. In addition, it must be emphasised that the Mycenaean sherd BN/P7 was found exactly between these structures and the limiting wall of the Double Chapel.

¹⁶⁵ Murray 1929: 8.

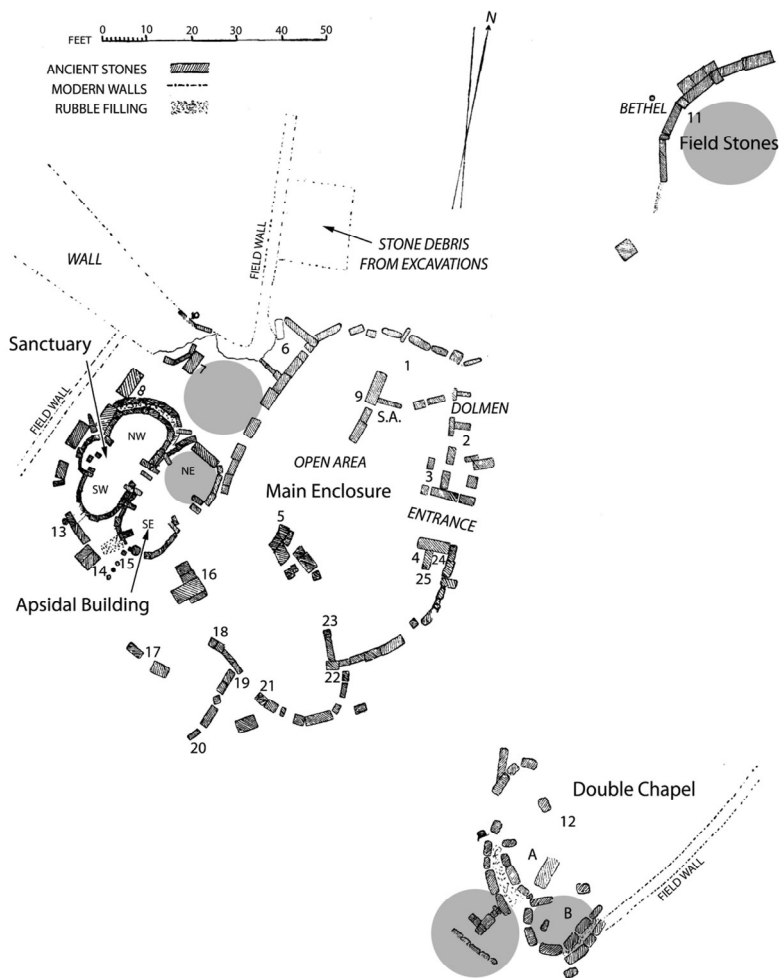


Figure 4.53. Plan of the temple area indicating the areas of major concentration of Bronze Age pottery (digitised by Maxine Anastasi).

It could mean that the Mycenaean vessel, datable to LH IIIB, was part of the assemblage of that Bronze Age structure or hut. To understand why it is only the aforementioned three areas that had the main concentrations of Bronze Age pottery is not an easy task. It is possible that the megalithic structures there were better

preserved than other parts of the temple or maybe that the restricted spaces were more apt for a shelter than the Open Area of the Main Enclosure. In any case, as stated by Evans, it seems clear that people re-occupying the temple 'had no interest in the previous religious function of the buildings, which they seem to have used for purely domestic purposes'¹⁶⁶.

Finally, it would be relevant to distinguish inside the three main areas of Middle Bronze Age occupation, those which had previously been occupied in the Early Bronze Age. Since Tarxien Cemetery phase pottery is so scarce it is hard to identify its find spot on the basis of Murray's descriptions. Having said this, Murray does state that the carinated bowl, of which only one fragment (BN/P186) was located in the museum, was found 'in the space between chapel A and the limiting stones'¹⁶⁷. This means that the findspot is close to the place where the structures we believe belong to the Borg in-Nadur phase (where the Mycenaean vessel was found), were built.

The last issue about the use of the temple concerns its abandonment. Although II B3 phase pottery is scarce the Geometric importations suggest strongly that the place still had a relevant position at the time. The abundance of II B3 phase pottery in the village a small distance away could suggest to us a movement of inhabitants from the temple area to the village for reasons which are not clear. But besides the general state of fragmentation of the pottery discovered there, the case of restorable or complete Borg in-Nadur phase vessels suggest not a gradual but a sudden abandonment¹⁶⁸. The idea of leaving an entire storage jar, like BN/P5, behind would seem wholly unreasonable.

It is possible that the need for defense convinced the dwellers of the temple area to abandon it and move closer to the main bastion of the village. Maybe the arrival of foreign seamen carrying exotic objects, like the Geometric vessels to which sherds BN/P129 and BRG/10/43 belong, in some way caused the abandonment of the temple area after millennia of use. But this is only a suggestion meant to provoke rather than to provide likely solutions. The latter will only be forthcoming if research on Borg in-Nadur continues.

¹⁶⁶ Evans 1971: 14.

¹⁶⁷ Murray 1929: 17, pls 15,5, 22,200.

¹⁶⁸ Murray 1925: 35-36, pl. 18,1-5; BN/P1, BN/P3, BN/P4, BN/P8, BN/P11.

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