Natalie Abell. 2021. *Keos: results of excavations conducted by the University of Cincinnati under the auspices of The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Volume XII. Ayia Irini: Area B.* Atlanta, GA: Lockwood Press; 978-1-948488-57-0 hardback $99.50.

Alongside Phylakopi on Melos and Akrotiri on Thera, the harbour town of Ayia Irini on the northwestern coast of Kea remains one of the most important settlements of the Cycladic later Bronze Age. Located in an enviable position at the northern edge of the Cycladic archipelago, and within sight of the southern coasts of both Attica and Euboea, it was a vital node in those Bronze Age maritime networks which connected Cycladic communities with others on Crete and the Greek mainland (and further afield). It remains a key vantage point from which to view socio-cultural change in the Aegean. Excavation of the site, under the auspices of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA), was begun in 1960 and concluded by 1976. The ground for the current study was prepared by the late Aliki Halepa Bikaki, director of the Area B excavations, and it is to her memory that the volume is dedicated, but it is Abell’s diligent untangling of the legacy record, and her knowledge of Bronze Age Cycladic pottery, which return Area B into the light, 60 years after it was first uncovered.

The volume presents deposits associated with Late Bronze Age (LBA) House B and an adjacent alleyway, AB. Terraced into the hillside at the southeastern edge of the settlement, House B consists now only of a northwestern line of six basement rooms. Architectural remains here exceed several metres in height, but the southeastern portion of the building has been lost entirely to the transgression of the Gulf of Ayios Nikolaos, which would have been several metres lower during the LBA. Earlier deposits now lie below sea level. The occupation of House B belongs to a period of significant external social and political influence in the Cyclades, *c.* 1700–1400 BCE, Late Cycladic I-II (Periods VI-VII in the Ayia Irini sequence), and its history is closely linked to the fortunes of the settlement at large.

Much of the text is dedicated to the presentation and analysis of Early (EBA), Middle (MBA) and LBA pottery, alongside a smaller number of other artefact types; some appearing elsewhere in other of the *Keos* series. A focus on the resolution within this assemblage of a fine-grained provenance at the scale of the single centre or micro-region, and of technological and technical choice within the *chaine opératoire* of pottery manufacture (p. 8–9), is symptomatic of the more general current thrust in Cycladic, and Aegean, archaeology toward the bottom-up analysis of networked relationships between communities, and the circulation of material culture and cultural and technological knowledge.

In the identification of provenance, the low availability of published MBA and LBA Cycladic sites is keenly felt. Despite detailed macroscopic, petrographic and chemical (WD-XRF) analyses (Chapter 3; Appendices III-VII), lack of comparative data precludes the association of many of a large number of fabric groups with likely production units; similarly so, several Cretan subtypes. Nevertheless, it is still possible to identify diverse interactions at multiple scales subsuming various Aegean producers, and consumption patterns in House B which echo those of the wider community.

Much of the early LBA (Period VI) pottery is locally manufactured. Of the imports, around a quarter come from Melos or Thera, sources still indistinguishable petrographically, despite best efforts; other Cycladic producers contribute roughly the same number of vessels as those on the Greek mainland, most of the latter probably reaching Ayia Irini via micro-regional networks permeating Attica and/or Euboea (p. 199–201). Cretan products comprise roughly half the number again; changing fabric types signposting modification of the relationships maintained by Ayia Irini with producers there. In the following period (VII), over half of Area B imports come from the Greek mainland and the Saronic island of Aegina—then a major production centre. Cycladic imports represent around a fifth of the total; Cretan, less than a tenth. At the same time, local production on Kea itself perhaps becomes more complex, reflecting a wider Aegean trend toward the intensification of regional production, ceramic commercialisation and longer-distance exchange (p. 223–226).

Technically, Keian production appears rather conservative, characterised by homogeneity in the use of particular raw materials, processing activities, firing practices across shape and ware categories, and a remarkable technological stability through the MBA and LBA (p. 150). Vessel forming techniques appear to vary not as a function of social or cultural norms, but simply as the result of individual choices taken about how best to do things (pp. 203, 223–224). Even the potter’s wheel, arriving in the Cyclades first via MBA Cretan networks and initially associated explicitly with Minoan or Minoanising shapes, over generations may have been reframed as a local technology in the minds of Keian producers, who subsequently adopted it for wheel-coiled and wheel-thrown production of an expanded pottery repertoire. Ayia Irini has, of course, contributed much to discussion of ‘Minoanisation’ in the Cyclades, the process of engagement of island communities with Cretan ideas, technologies and material culture. The theme is woven throughout; House B, offering further perspective on the equilibrium of local and non-local practices within the settlement, and those engaged in them.

Abell achieves a valuable, detailed and methodical study, destined for endless revisitation. A narrative summary (Chapter 8) spotlighting Ayia Irini on the Aegean stage provides the easiest entry point for those unfamiliar with the site, and the complex ceramic landscape of the Bronze Age Aegean, though total newcomers are likely to meet with a challenge; *Area B* is, unapologetically, for ceramicists first, and all others second. Nor is it the story of House B as much as that of Ayia Irini’s community; the activities of House B proving secondary to those of the larger *chaine opératoires* of pottery production and exchange, the identity of House B, and its occupants, realised only indirectly, as part of the larger whole. The difficult record has surely proved limiting in this regard, though perhaps to no great disadvantage, when such interesting stories were being played out at scale.

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