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**The Final Neolithic-Early Bronze Age transition  
in Phaistos, Crete:  
an investigation of continuity and change  
in ceramic manufacture**

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## ABSTRACT

The Final Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods in Crete are considered as times of transformation in settlement pattern, of the emergence of complex architecture and related innovative material culture, which presage the social changes of later phases. The change in ceramic repertoire has been used to argue for a technological and cultural ‘revolution’ at the beginning of the Bronze Age, perhaps even of the influx of new population. The site of Phaistos in Southern Crete offers great potential for examining the Final Neolithic-Early Bronze Age transition in Crete and to investigate the degree of continuity and change, on account of the completeness of its stratigraphy, as well as the abundance of the ceramic material.

This study critically examines the production technology of ceramics during the Final Neolithic and Early Minoan I at Phaistos, addressing issues of technological change in this period of transition and discussing how the reconstruction of ceramic manufacture can be related to the changes occurring over time at the site. The investigation of technological variation within the ceramic assemblages is performed by integrating macroscopic observation and an integrated analytical programme involving thin section petrography, scanning electron microscopy, Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy and X-ray diffractometry, in order to reconstruct technological choices on raw material choice and manipulation, surface treatment and firing practice. This is combined with the information available on forming techniques and shape. The *chaîne opératoire* interpretative framework is adopted as a means to reconstruct the operational sequence of pottery manufacture, and to embed such an understanding within the social context of the communities of the Mesara Plain.

By examining the significance of technological choices in pottery making within the context of Phaistos, the study demonstrates a complex picture of continuity and change over the period of study, which belies recent conjecture of a single-phase transformation at the beginning of the Early Bronze Age. Furthermore, it suggests that in some of the phases considered changes in the organisation and practice of pottery production can be related to changes in consumption at this special site, which saw an array of activities before construction of the later court-centred building.

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