

SOME OBSERVATIONS
CONCERNING
MINYAN CUPS

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Minyan cup shapes can be divided into two general categories: the angular profile and the concave-convex types.

The rim of the angular profile type turns out, meets the shoulder at an angle and the shoulder in turn meets the body at an angle thus:



The drawing is simplified for the sake of clarity. A variation of this is seen in the rounded profile which is essentially the same outline but with a softer line. The shoulder meets the body, with less emphasis, to form a curve.



Very often, it is difficult to distinguish between a cup and a bowl since this style was quite popular and was made in many sizes. Whether a vessel is a cup or bowl, therefore, becomes an arbitrary matter. If a vessel appears to be wide and shallow enough for drinking without becoming cumbersome, it has been included in this survey as a cup.

The concave-convex type is rather different. In outline, it curves in a concave fashion from the rim to approximately two-thirds of the body down and then curves convexly to the base.



Both of these types have high-swung handles (some swinging higher and more outwardly than others), set vertically from the rim to the line where the base of the handle meets the body without a break in the curve.

In dealing with Minyan cups, I have tried to adhere to the generally recognizable Minyan fabrics - Gray, Argive or Black, Yellow, Red Burnished¹, monochrome brown and reddish-yellow clays.

¹C.W. Blegen, "The Pre-Mycenaean Pottery of the Southern Greek Mainland," Classification des Céramiques Antiques, pp. 9-10.

Where I have included a vase whose fabric is doubtful of classification, I have indicated that fact. The examples used were taken from excavators' reports, publications on the finds, material from the Chaeronea Museum, and the Lerna collection in the Corinth Museum.² Full descriptions were not given, occasionally, of the pots illustrated in publications, so that information is not always complete. The sites mentioned below are by no means the only ones where Minyan has been recorded. It has been found in many places (^{see} q.v. list at the end of this report) but a further study of Minyan ware will be left for a later date.

I. Angular Profile Type

A. "Sharp Profile"

1. Cup with two vertical high-swung ribbon handles set from rim to base of shoulder. The bottom of the cup is usually flattened and there is no decoration on the vessel. The following sites have yielded this type:

Gray Minyan - Eleusis, PE, p. 69, f. 43:28
Eutresis, Eut, p. 139, f. 187:3-4
Orchomenos, Chaeronea Museum
Dimini, D-S, p. 148, f. 58
Seskho, D-S, p. 140, f. 42
Pteleon, Prak, 1951, p. 139, f. 8:a
Zerelia, W-T, p. 156, f. 103:d
Krisa, BCH 1938, p. 114, f. 3:1
Malthi, SME, pl. XVIII:36
Syros, EphArch 1899, pl. 9:27

"Brown Ware" polished
Marmariani, D-S, p. 259, f. 162

"Yellow biscuit, red at core"
Ithaca, A-I, pl. 73:3

A variation in the handle of this type occurs in the sixth level

²I am grateful to Mr. J. L. Caskey for allowing me to examine and use the Lerna unpublished material.

at Troy. The handles are set horizontally on the rim and slant outwardly. Otherwise, the cup is the same (Troy III, f. 292b:A92, f. 423:32.100).

Another departure is found in a cup from Malthi (SME, pl. XVIII:35). It is of Black Minyan fabric, has an out-turned rim and sharp shoulder but the body line slopes inwardly.



2. The sharp-profile, flat-base cup is often found with rills or grooves on the shoulder.



The fabric was not specified in the following examples:

Sesklo, D-S, p. 141, f. 45 (also in W-T, p. 62, f. 32:a)
Molyvopyrgo, BSA 29, p. 163, f. 38:7
Tiryns, Tiryns I, pl. XV:11

At Dimini, an Argive Minyan cup was found with two incised horizontal lines on the shoulder (JHS 34, p. 132, f.5).

3. This category covers the same cup but with a small raised or pedestaled base; otherwise, it is like A1 above. It has been found in the following places:



Gray Minyan - Sesklo, D-S, p. 134, f. 34
Troy, Troy III, f. 292b:A94; f. 430:3-4

It occurs with one handle at Troy (Troy III, f. 292b:A96; f. 435:34.293).

Another handle variation comes from Troy also: Troy III, f. 292b:A99.

This Gray minyan cup has oblique handles set horizontally on the rim.

Troy III, f. 292b:A100 has one handle set horizontally on the rim and one high swung with a knob-like projection on the top-most curve.

Black Minyan - Malthi, SME, pl. XVIII:47
Ithaca, A-I, pl. 73:7
Asine, Asine, p. 268, f. 185:2

Brown monochrome unpolished
Argos, BCH 1906, p. 9, f. 3

Red-yellow fabric
Ithaca, A-I, p. 73:9



Undesignated fabric

Undesignated fabric

Ithaca, V.B., p. 10, f. a

Asine, Asine, p. 268, f. 185:3 - handles missing

Two Yellow Minyan goblets, one from Mycenae (MT, pl. X:48), the other from Zygouries (Zyg., p. 126, f. 118), have a slightly different rim-to-shoulder line: it is not sharply angular but almost straight. The

Mycenaeen cup:  and the Zygouries vessel: 

It appears these are variations on the basic pattern.

4. This category is for a cup with small raised base and with grooves or rills on the shoulder, similar to A2 above.



There is a Gray Minyan bowl at Eutresis (Eut, p. 138, f. 187:2) which fits this description. A similar one of brown polished ware was found at Asine (Asine, p. 287, f. 198:5) but with only one high-swung handle. The vessel mentioned above from Troy (f. 292b:A100) also fits into this group because it has rills on the shoulder and has a slim, low stem and spreading foot. It is illustrated in Troy III, f. 433:36.705.

I. B. The rounded profile of this type is much the same as Group A above except that the line formed from the rim to the body is softer and presents a smoother transition. The handles are vertical, high-swung ribbon, joined at the rim and to the body so that the line of the handle merges imperceptibly into the body line.

1. The rounded cups in this class usually have no base; they are merely flattened. They also have two vertical, high-swung ribbon handles attached at the rim and to the body to form one line with it. Only one example has come to light with a very small base. It is a Yellow Minyan cup from Mycenae (MT, pl. V:22; also in Myc-Tir, p. 240, f. 349). The cups listed below are all without base:




Gray Minyan - Asine, Asine, p. 265, f. 184:3
Marmariani, BMC v. 1, pt. 1, p. 51, f. 54
Sesklo, D-S, p. 134, f. 35

Three examples from western Greece show what may be a local peculiarity - spirals incised, emanating from the base of the handle out.

One example from Olympia has a spiral design below the shoulder as well.

Olympia, A-0, p. 89, f. 12:1, 3
Ithaca, BSA 25, p. 30, f. 26:106

Western Greece affords still another variation. From Thermon come two cups made of a coarse Gray Minyan fabric whose high-swung handles are pointed at the top-most curve  and whose bodies are suggestive of Minyan rounded profile: ArchDelt II, p. 185, f. 8.

Yellow Minyan - Krisa, BCH 1938, p. XXII:2
Prosymna, Pros v. 2, f. 75:1200

"Yellowish clay" - Sesklo, D-S, p. 147, f. 55

"Black ware" (perhaps Argive Minyan)
Drachmani, EphArch 1908, p. 90, f. 14

"Brown or red clay"
Marmariani, D-S, p. 136, f. 38; p. 260, f. 163

"Reddish-yellow clay"
Ithaca, A-I, pl. 72:6

Undesignated fabric
Molyvopyrgo, BSA 29, p. 164, f. 39:7

In this category, there have been found two examples of Minyan shapes with matt-painted decoration. One is a two-handled cup of fine yellow clay, decorated in mauve matt paint, from Eutresis (Eut, p. 154, f. 214). On the handle are crossed diagonal lines with horizontal lines between and a zigzag pattern on the rim. Crossed diagonal lines separated by groups of four verticals are indicated on the body just below the

shoulder line.

The other example is from a large sherd found at Eleusis (EphArch 1912, p. 3, f. 1:4). It is of greenish clay (probably of the type used in fine Matt-Painted ware), with the remains of one high-swung handle decorated in matt paint, and with four horizontal lines at its base and three near the top. One narrow band edges the rim, two are on the shoulder, and a broad one is around the widest part of the body.

2. This type includes the rounded profile cup with a low stemmed base and two handles. Both examples come from Western Greece. This may be a shape peculiar to that area.



Black Minyan - Malthi, SME, p. 295, f. 66

Red clay - Thermon, ArchDelt, p. 264, f. 29

3. The last division of Group B is a cup with rounded profile, no base, (in some cases completely round on the bottom and unable to stand by itself) and one high-swung handle. Many of these are similar to dippers. The style seems to have been very popular in Yellow Minyan ware since that fabric is the commonest found.



Yellow Minyan - Eutresis, EutPR, p. 56, f. 46:2, 3
Krisa, BCH 1938, pl. XXII:1
Korakou, Kor, p. 19, f. 26
Prosymna, Pros v. 2, f. 43:572, f. 62:758

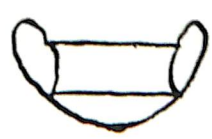
Gray Minyan - Krisa, BCH 1938, p. 114, f. 3:2
Eutresis, Eut, p. 139, f. 187:1

From Thermon comes a cup of reddish coarse clay with handle like the above examples but twice again as high as the cup itself: ArchDelt 1915, p. 262, f. 26.

The next broad classification of Minyan cup with high-swung handle

is the concave-convex type mentioned above. The variations are not as many in this category as in the first.

The outline of the cup is concave from rim to at least half, and more often two-thirds, of the body down and convex from there to the base. The base is either a flattened bottom or ends, very frequently, in a very small base. As a matter of fact, the only cup listed below with a flattened base is the one matt-painted specimen from Eutresis listed under IIB. The handles, in every case, are of the vertical, high-swung ribbon type, usually two in number.



II. A. The first type in this category has the outline described above and has no decoration, except for Lerna cup L. 4 which has ^{five} ~~three~~ or ~~four~~ ^{punched} incised circles at the base of the handle in imitation, probably, of rivets. All the cups found are of Gray Minyan fabric.

- Lerna, Inventory nos. L. 4, ⁶, ²⁴, ²⁵, ¹⁶⁵, ¹⁶⁶, (^{sherd}A-332), (^{sherd}B-345)
- Eutresis, Eut, p. 142, f. 195:3
- Argos-Aspis, BCH 1906, p. 17, f. 16-17
- Argos, JHS 34, p. 130, f. 3

The cups listed above all have two handles except for fragments which are incomplete: Eutresis cup, Argos-Aspis f. 17, and Lerna L. 4, ¹⁶⁶, (A-332), and (B-345).

B. Another group of cups in this category is of exactly the same shape as IIA, except that they are decorated with matt paint. The clay of the Aegina cups is greenish yellow and is probably Matt-Painted fine ware, utilizing a Minyan shape. The same holds true for the Eutresis vessel. The Asine cup is of Gray Minyan fabric.

- Aegina, Aig, p. 21, f. 24
- Asine, Asine, p. 268, f. 186:1
- Eutresis, pl. XV:1

The matt-painted decoration on these cups is quite uniform. On all, except one Aegina cup, there is a running zigzag of three or four lines starting at the base of the concave portion of the body and going one-half to two-thirds of the way up:



This pattern is turned upside down and used to decorate the upper portion of the body near the rim:



The inside of the rim often has three or four short vertical lines placed near the handle and opposite it. The convex part, similarly, has the same zigzag pattern. The Eutresis cup has a double line of hanging festoons on the lower part of the body.

One of the Aegina cups is much restored but the original shows remains of three circles with a dot in the middle, these being placed on the concave portion of the body. Below them and the angle are faint traces of the zigzag pattern.


C. Type C deals with some variations on the standard.

Gray Minyan - Tsangli, W-T, p. 108, f. 58:c

"Gray clay" - Chauchitsa, BSA, 24, p. 25, f. 20

"Gray monochrome"

Vardaroftsa, BSA 27, pl. XX:a:l

Only the Tsangli cup is listed definitely as being made of Minyan fabric. The concave portion is straighter, with the upper part flaring out near the top thus:  and covered with rills or grooves. The convex part is the same as the IIA cups. The Chauchitsa cup is of gray clay and has the standard concave-convex profile, the upper part also being grooved. The cup stands on a low conical foot. The Vardaroftsa example has the same type of foot but instead of fills on the body there are two bands of four or five lines each, placed near the rim and the angle made by the meeting of the concavity and the convexity.

In conclusion, there are some general statements concerning Minyan ware which should be kept in mind. Most archaeologists agree that the Minyan shape derives from a metal prototype, and that the angular profile developed into the curved profile which, in turn, carried into Late Helladic pottery. At Asine, however, Persson found that in the earliest Middle Helladic layers Minyan ware "lacked the characteristic sharp profile lines of the later Minyan ware (Asine, p. 260). Yellow Minyan arrived on the Middle Helladic scene later, became more plentiful than Gray or Argive Minyan, and carried into the Late Helladic period. Gray Minyan has been found in Late Helladic strata but it has become rare.

ABBREVIATIONS

A-I	Alt-Ithaka
Aig	Aigina
A-O	Alt-Olympia
ArchDelt	Archaeologikon Deltion
BCH	Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique
BMC	Catalog of Vases in the British Museum, Prehistoric Aegean Pottery
BSA	Annual of the British School at Athens
D-S	Prehistoric Acropolises of Dimini and Sesklo
EphArch	Ephemeris Archaeologike
Eut	Excavations at Eutresis
EutPR	Preliminary Report on Eutresis
JHS	Journal of Hellenic Studies
Kor	Korakou
MT	Mykenische Thongefaesse
Myc-Tir	Mycenae & Tiryns
PE	Prehistoric Eleusis
Prak	Praktika
Pros	Prosymna
SME	Swedish Messenia Expedition
Troy	Troy III
VB	Vierter Brief ueber Leukas-Ithaka
W-T	Prehistoric Thessaly
Zyg	Zygouries

SITES WHERE MINYAN WARE HAS BEEN REPORTED

Aetolia	Thermon
Aegina	
Arcadia	Asea
Argolid	Argos, Asine, Berbati, Dendra, Lerna, Mycenae, Prosymna, Tiryns
Argolid-Corinth	Haliki, Tsoungiza
Attica	Aphidna, Athens, Brauron, Eleusis, Thorikos
Boeotia	Ayios Ioannis, Eutresis, Gla, Haliartos, Orchomenos, Tanagra, Thebes, Poliyira
Chalcidice	Hagias Mamas, Molyvopyrgo
Corinthia	Corinth, Korakou, Perdikaria, Zygouries, Gonia
Elis	Olympia
Ithaca	
Laconia	Amyklaion
Macedonia	Chauchitsa, Vardaroftsa
Megarid	Minoa, Nisaia
Melos	Phylakopi
Messenia	Malthi
Paros	
Phocis	Drachmani, Hagia Marina, Krisa, Piperi-Yiannakopoulos
Phthiotis	Thebes
Syros	
Thessaly	Aidiniotiki Magoula, Dimini, Lianokladhi, Marmariani, Pteleon, Rini, Sesklo, Surpi, Tsangli, Tsani, Zerelia
Asia Minor	Troy
Rumania	Cucuteni

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