

AEGINA MH III–LH I: CERAMIC PHASES OF AN AEGEAN TRADE-DOMAIN

Wolfgang Wohlmayr

Two distinguishing features mark the urban development of Aegina-Kolonna during the middle phases of the Aegean Bronze Age: the continuous growth of fortification walls around the main settlement and the establishment of an “inner suburb” or inner ring encased by much weaker fortifications (Fig. 1). These are features of a community that was flourishing and that consequently provided for its safety. Given the highly mercantile character of the site, it is not surprising that at the end of Middle Bronze Age (MBA) the settlement at Kolonna experienced further expansion. Evidence of Mycenaean buildings in this sector – northeast of the suburb and the so-called shaft-grave district – has been known for a long time.¹

Excavations in the 1980s brought to light several rooms, or better, chambers, outside this inner extension and inclined toward its east wall (Fig. 2). Without a doubt – as attested by ceramic deposits – these chambers have to belong to the latest MBA and to the Early Mycenaean (EM) period. Although the focus of my paper will lie on these ceramics, let us first cast an eye on the architectural remains in this part of Cape Kolonna. The northern boundary of the above-mentioned structures is a Mycenaean wall, one section of which is comparatively well preserved.² A gate within this Cyclopean-like wall, still visible, was filled in during later Mycenaean times. The EM building complex consists of the above-mentioned gate, a yard opening directly onto a few chambers, and at least one passage parallel to the MBA suburb wall. The complex is evidently a small bastion or bulwark of the Aeginetan settlement.

Upon excavation, the following structures were able to be clearly identified: the Mycenaean north wall, interior sections of the older fortress wall, the

blocked entrance, and, backed onto the suburb wall at a lower ground level, the so-called chambers.

In contrast to this “inner suburb” of the town (Kolonna VIII to X), the precise area of which is known, the “outer suburb” – the beginnings of town XI – could only be verified in one small, trapezoidal area. One reason for the difficulty is the increase in rock level in the eastern section of this area, which resulted in only parts of the EM houses being covered by subsequent structures. The mighty relics of a later Mycenaean fortress were already, although only sketchily, presented by Gabriel Welter in the 1920s.³ The Mycenaean houses were largely destroyed in later centuries by construction of the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods. Although most remains of the LH I–II period were displaced by building activities of later periods, a small part of the EM settlement has survived *in situ*.⁴

Ceramic deposits at Kolonna of MH III–LH I date can be defined as predominantly local: Aeginetan potters’ workshops had continued to carry on their exceptional production. The pottery falls into three major classes: a smaller group of pattern-painted vases decorated with one or more paints lacking altogether in luster and which are therefore termed “matt-painted”; a larger group of monochrome, hardly burnished red-, brown-, and black-slipped wares; and finally, unpainted and relatively coarse wares (“cooking pottery”). This spectrum of ceramics, collected under the term “Aegina Gold-Mica-Fabrics”, is characterized by a distinctive form of mineral temper that includes gold mica.⁵

My investigations are based upon the following criteria. Which characteristic types and shapes of vases can be defined in this area of the excavations? Which shapes and decorative patterns can be identified at Kolonna in the transition between the Middle

¹ Bibliography: WELTER 1938; HILLER 1975; WALTER 1993; KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1997; WOHLMAYR 2000.

² WOHLMAYR 2000, 127, fig. 61.

³ WELTER 1925, figs. 3–7; 1926, 432–3; 1929, 185; 1938, 11, fig. 9, 21ff.

⁴ Evidently the settlement at Kolonna enlarges both to its

south and west in EM times. Excavations have uncovered rich ceramic deposits that provide firm evidence of the settlement’s flowering at this period.

⁵ Bibliography: DIETZ 1991, 8 ff.; MARAN 1992, 179ff.; ZERNER 1993, 39–56.

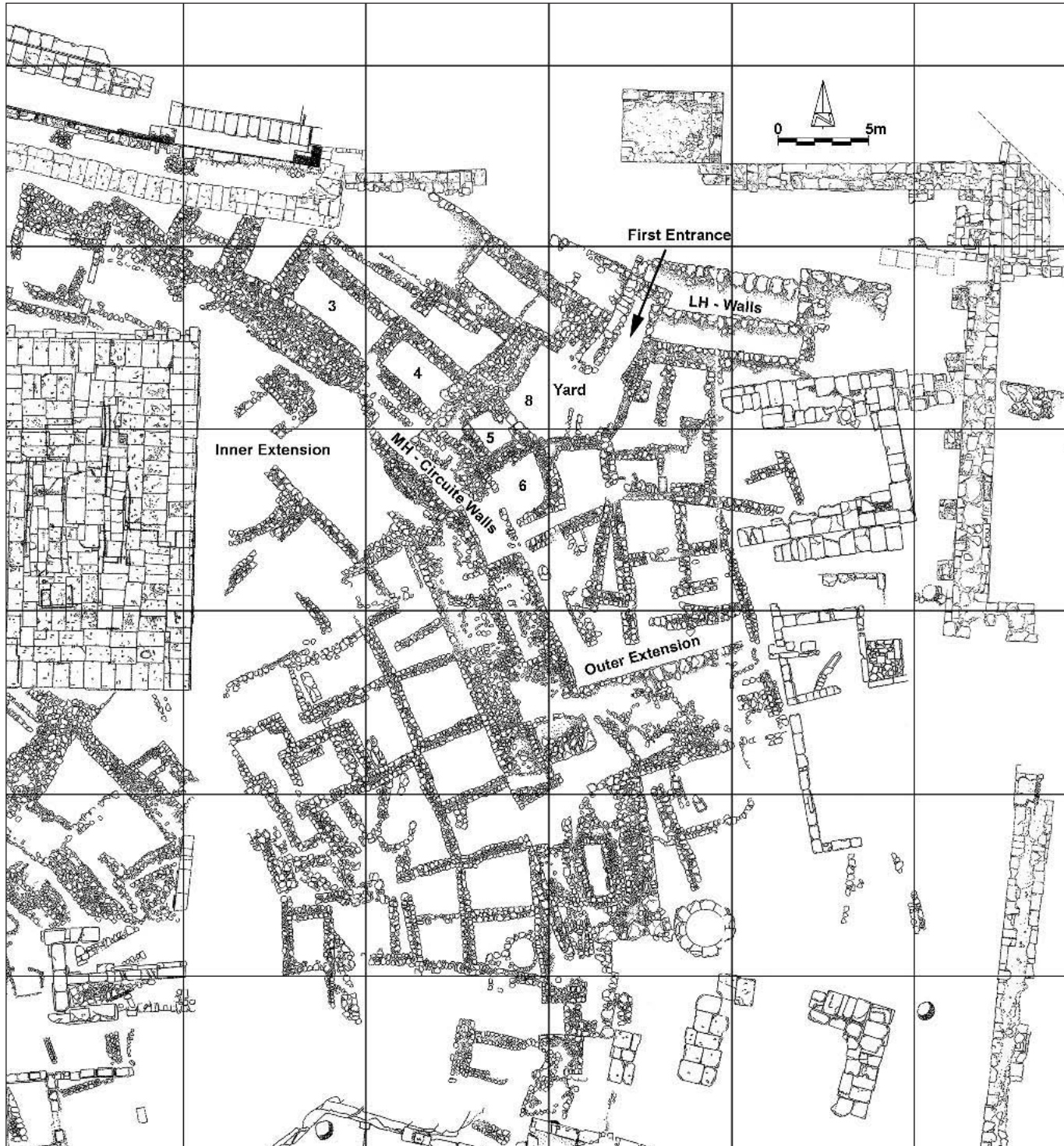


Fig. 1 General plan of the north-eastern part of Kolonna excavations

and Late Bronze Age? What are the invariable characteristics of this “Aegina ware”? In the following catalogue, I present closely connected finds of ceramics that – with due caution – can be taken to mark two periods of the “outer suburb”: the first, connected with the latest MH and very early EM pottery style, and the second, connected with the developed EM style (LH IB) at Aegina.

FIRST GROUP

1. Amphora K 1 (2049) (Fig. 3)

H. 0.77 m; made up of many pieces.

Biscuit beige, without painted decoration; potter's mark on the handles.

2. Amphora K 10 I/1 (3106) (Fig. 5a–c)

Biscuit reddish yellow on the surface; porous and



Fig. 2 Early Mycenaean ‘chamber system’ of the Outer Extension (1987)

splintery; “firnisartige Mattfarbe”; decorated with circles.

3. Amphora K 13 I/1 (3422) (Fig. 4)

H. ca. 0.45 m (complete).

Biscuit beige yellow; “firnisartige Mattfarbe”; decorated with bends and scrolls.

4. Jar (?) K 4 I/2 (3265) (Fig. 6)

Fragment.

Biscuit reddish yellow on the surface.

5. Jar (?) K 10 I/10 (3110) (Fig. 8a, b)

Fragments.

Biscuit with a greenish look; “firnisartige Mattfarbe”; late “Aeginetan” decorative scheme.

6. Alabastron (?) K 8 I/3 (Fig. 7a, b)

Fragment.

Very fine greenish biscuit; light green-beige slip; “firnisartige Mattfarbe”; decorated with spirals and bends.

7. Bend-bowl K 8 I/1 (Fig. 9a, b)

Fragment. D. ca. 0.18 m.

Biscuit with a greenish look; “firnisartige Matt-

farbe”; wavy line. Traditional shape.

8. Cup K 4 I/1 (3264) (Fig. 10a, b)

Fragment. D. ca. 0.15 m.

Biscuit with a reddish look; vertical panels and wavy lines. Local variation of a P-cup.

9. Cup K 8 I/7 (Fig. 11a, b)

Fragment. D. ca. 0.15 m.

Biscuit reddish beige on the surface; “firnisartige Mattfarbe”.

10. P-cup (“Aeginetan”) K 8 I/4 (Fig. 12a, b)

Fragment.

Local clay; “firnisartige Mattfarbe”.

11. Straight-sided cup K 8 I/2 (Fig. 13a, b)

Fragment. D. ca. 0.7 m.

Local clay; very fine biscuit; “firnisartige Mattfarbe”.

12. Goblet K 8 I/5 (Fig. 14a–c)

Fragments. D. ca. 0.22 m.

Biscuit soft; orange-reddish splintery slip, smooth burnished. Early shape.

SECOND GROUP

13. Jar (?) K 10 II/4 (3143) (Fig. 15a–c)

Biscuit reddish; surface not burnished. Bichrome decor with stripes and curvilinear elements.

14. “Äginaschüssel” K 10 II/10 (Fig. 16a, b)

Fragments. D. ca. 0.26 m.

Biscuit greenish; stripes and curvilinear elements in dark matt painting, brown at the rim (“bichrome ware”).

15. “Äginaschüssel” K 10 II/16 (3104) (Fig. 18)

D. ca. 0.28 m.

Biscuit reddish yellow on the surface, light-colored slip; decor with hanging bends (“bichrome ware”).

16. “Äginaschüssel” K 10 II/15 (Fig. 17)

D. ca. 0.26–0.28 m.

17. Bowl (small “Äginaschüssel”) K 10 II/25 (Fig. 19a, b)

D. ca. 0.20 m.

Reddish biscuit; stripes and a scroll in dark brown matt painting.

18. Hole-mouthed jar K 7 II/14 (3158) (Fig. 20a, b)

D. (rim) 0.22 m.

Reddish biscuit, red-brown slip; burnished.

19. Pot (“kitchen ware”) K 13 II/20 (Fig. 21a, b)

D. (rim) ca. 0.22 m.

Coarse biscuit; blackened.

20. Cup (“kitchen ware”) K 8 II/10 (Fig. 22a, b)

D. (rim) ca. 0.12 m.

Coarse biscuit.

21–22. Potters' marks ("kitchen ware") K 7 II/95.96 (Figs. 23a, b; 24a, b)

23–26. Potters' marks ("kitchen ware") K 8 II (Fig. 25a–d)

"Aeginetan" production of these two phases represents a wide assortment of matt-painted storage vessels (e.g., amphoras, jars) and table ware (e.g., bowls, jugs, cups) decorated with very late and restless patterns, some of them under the distinct influence of Greek "mainland style". In the first phase, recognizable initial signs of "Äginaschüsseln" and "bichrome ware" are absent, appearing during the next phases of development. Red-slipped bowls and goblets make up one of the distinct classes of local production, and the wide spectrum of undecorated medium coarse to coarse wares constitutes the main production of this "Aegean trade-domain" in EM times.

In the finds from these chambers of the "outer suburb", one can identify pottery characteristics that indicate the time span of the chambers' use. It is

important to note that in the context of the ceramic deposits, individual pieces are identifiable as traditional LH I ware: for example, a "straight-sided cup" with running spiral (Fig. 26a, b). But this traditional Mycenaean ware ("local production"!) occurs only in small quantities.

At the end of the MBA and the EM periods, settlements on Cape Kolonna see their largest expansion. Ceramic production prospers and remote trade comes to its height.⁶ In this context, the importance of Kolonna is evidently linked to the output of its local earthenware production. However, specific groups of Aegean pottery from this period (e.g., matt-painted, bichrome decorated pottery, burnished ware, plain wares) have not been sufficiently presented so far. My remarks refer to some deposits of the so-called outer suburb of prehistoric Aegina. This part of the settlement had been established at the end of MH period and the beginning of the first Mycenaean period. It has been my aim – very briefly – to present substantial classifications of ceramics, relevant to the questions of synchronization and, further, to construct a view of urban development of this important trade-domain.⁷

Bibliography

- DIETZ, S.
1991 *The Argolid at the transition to the Mycenaean age. Studies in the chronology and cultural development in the shaft grave period.* Copenhagen.
- HILLER, S.
1975 *Mykenische Keramik. Alt-Ägina IV, 1.* Mainz.
- KILIAN-DIRLMEIER, I.
1997 *Das mittelbronzezeitliche Schachtgrab von Ägina. Alt-Ägina IV, 3.* Mainz.
- MARAN, J.
1992b *Kiapha Thiti. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen.* Vol. II, 2, 2. Jt. v. Chr.: *Keramik und Kleinfunde.* MarbWPr 1990. Marburg.
- WALTER, H.
1993 *Ägina. Die archäologische Geschichte einer griechischen Insel.* München.
- WELTER, G.
1925 "Ägina. Archäologische Funde in den Jahren 1923/4." *AA* 40:318–21.
- 1926 "Inseln. Archäologische Funde im Jahr 1925." *AA* 41:432–3.
- 1929 Review of *Prehistoric Aegina (1925)*, edited by J.P. HARLAND. *Gnomon* V:185.
- 1938 *Aigina.* Berlin.
- WOHLMAYR, W.
2000 "Schachtgräberzeitliche Keramik aus Ägina." In: *Österreichische Forschungen zur Ägäischen Bronzezeit*, edited by F. BLAKOLMER, 127–36. Vienna.
- ZERNER, C.
1993 "New Perspectives on Trade in the Middle and Early Late Helladic Periods on the Mainland." In: *Proceedings of the Conference "Wace and Blegen. Pottery as Evidence for Trade in the Aegean Bronze Age 1939–1989." Held at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Athens, 2–3 Dec. 1989*, edited by C. ZERNER et al. 39–56. Amsterdam.

⁶ Some new ceramic deposits at Kolonna from the EM period attest the indisputable importance and range of local production during this phase. "Aegina ware" is found in quantity at island as well as coastal sites, and seems to be common at least as late as LH IIA.

⁷ I would like to express my thanks to Prof. Dr. F. Felten and the staff of the Aegina excavations, who made it possible for me to work on the ceramics presented here.

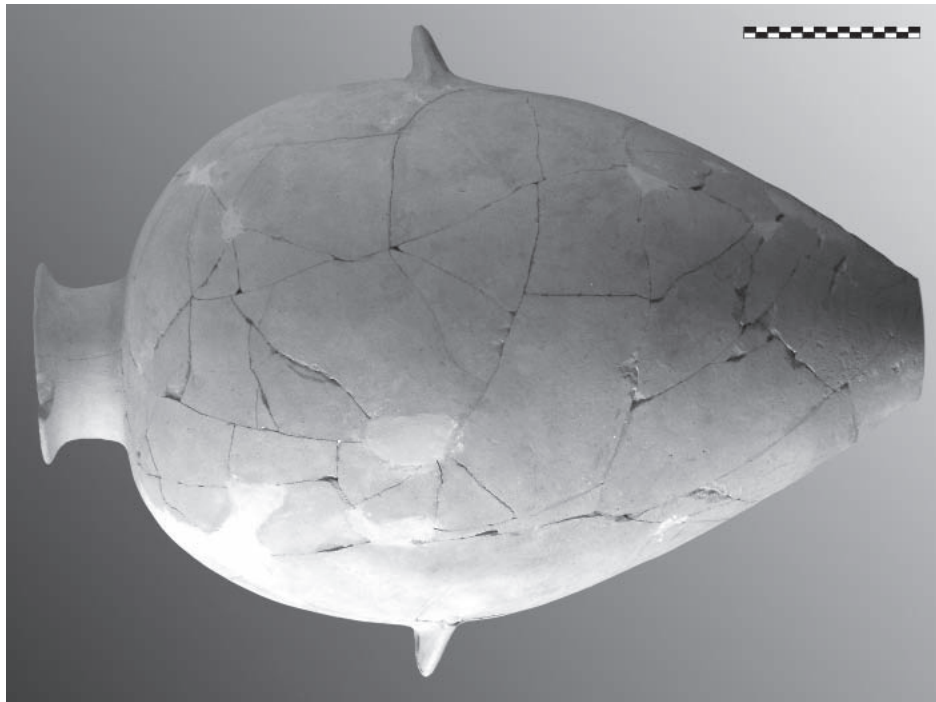


Fig. 3 K 8/1 (2049)

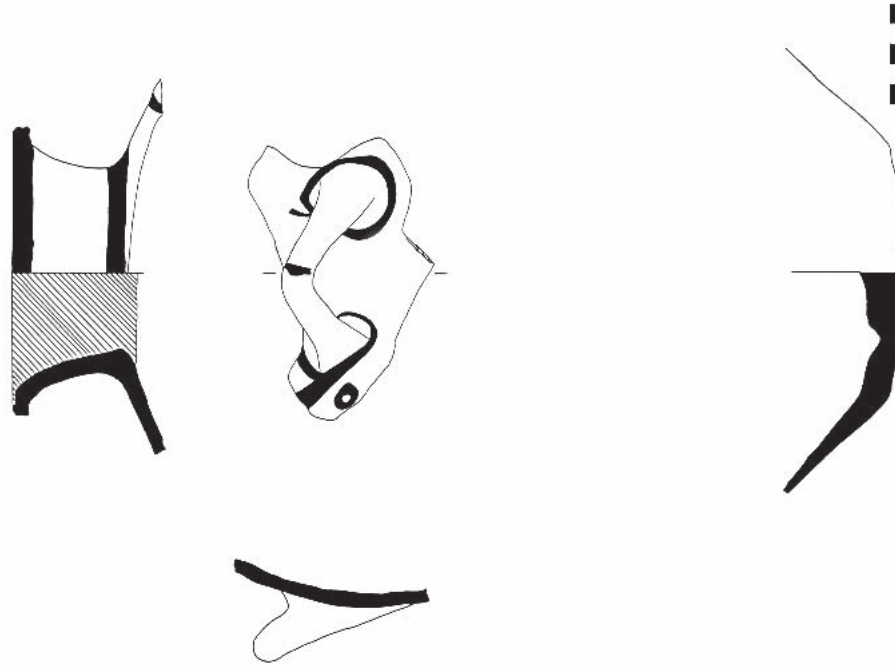


Fig. 4 K13 I/1 (3422)

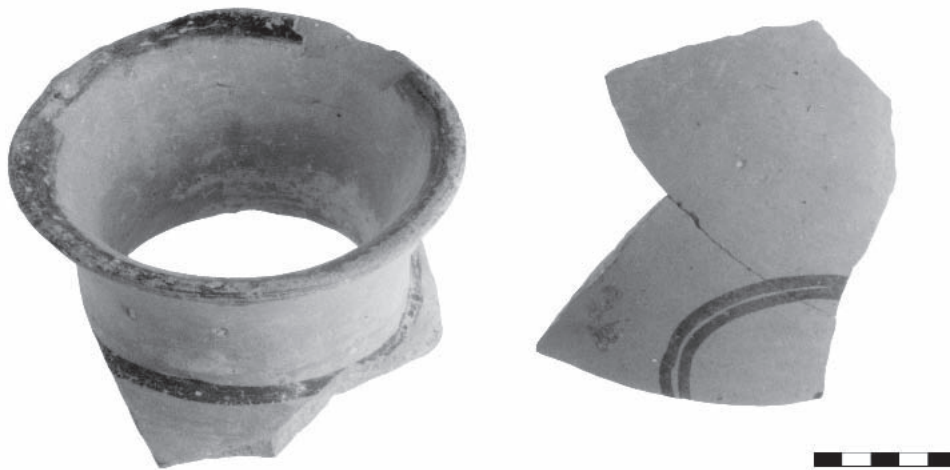
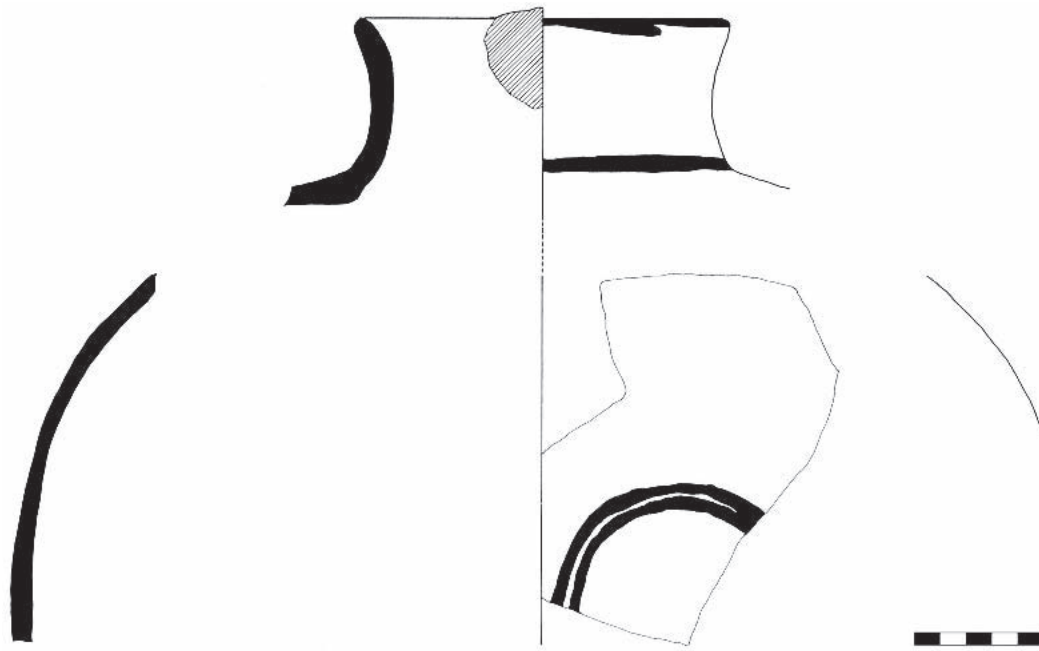


Fig. 5 a-c K10 I/1 (3106)



Fig. 6 K4 I/2 (3265)

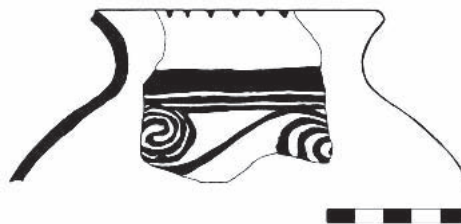


Fig. 7a K8 I/3



Fig. 7b K8 I/3

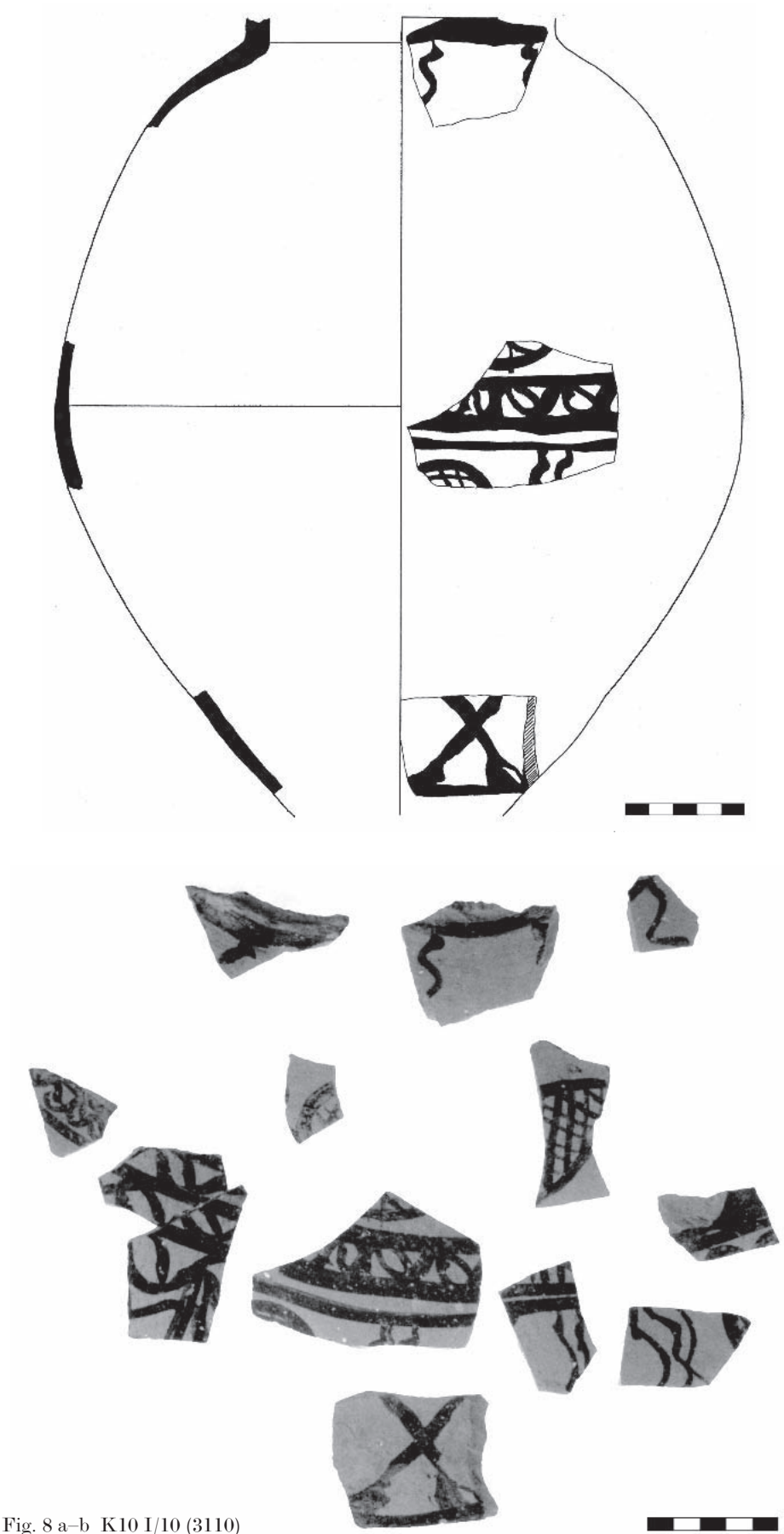


Fig. 8 a-b K10 I/10 (3110)

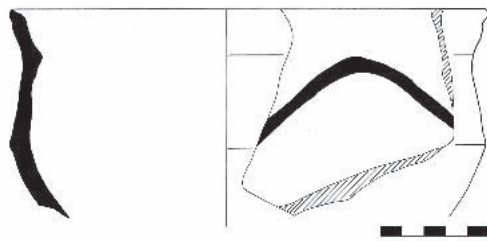


Fig. 9 a-b K8 I/1

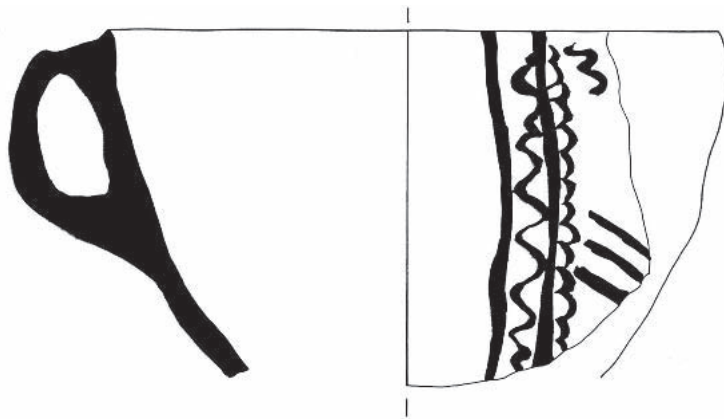


Fig. 10 a-b K4 I/1 (3264)

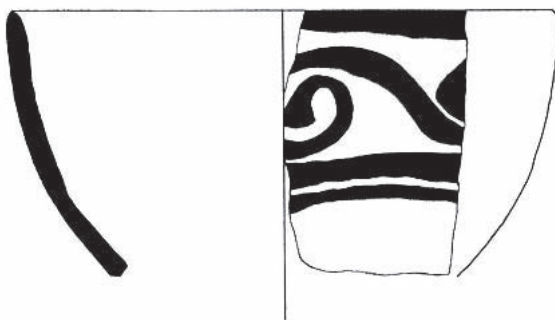


Fig. 11 a-b K8 I/7

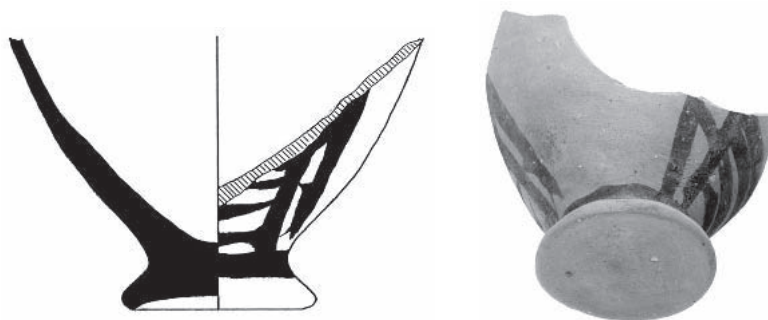


Fig. 12 a-b K8 I/4



Fig. 13 a-b K8 I/2

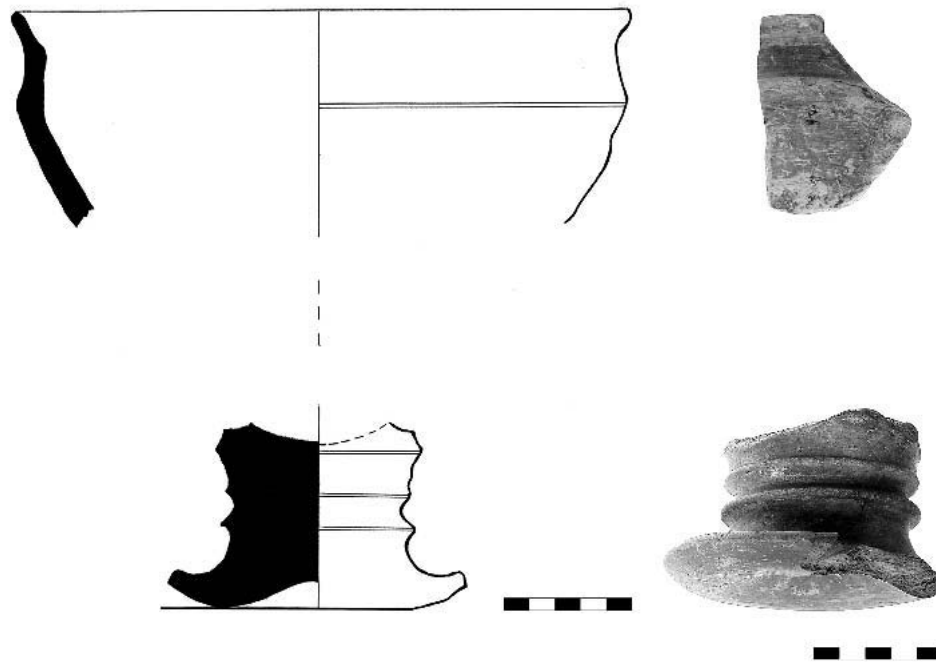


Fig. 14 a-c K8 I/5

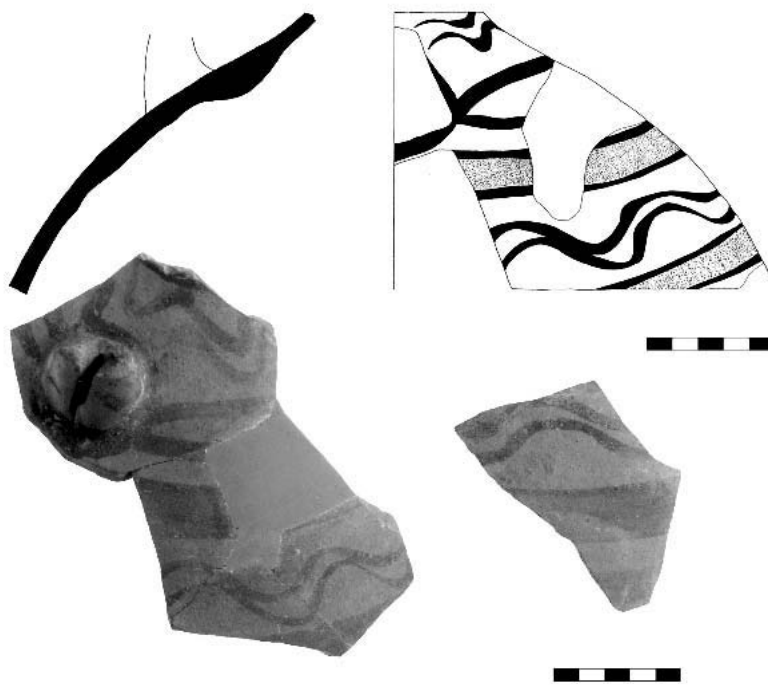


Fig. 15 a-c K10 II/4 (3143)

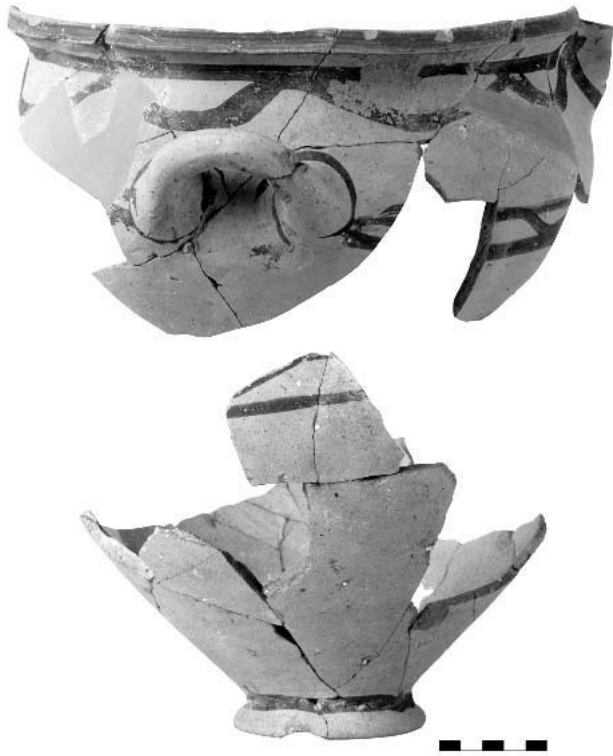


Fig. 16 a-b K10 II/10



Fig. 20 a-b K7 II/14 (3158)

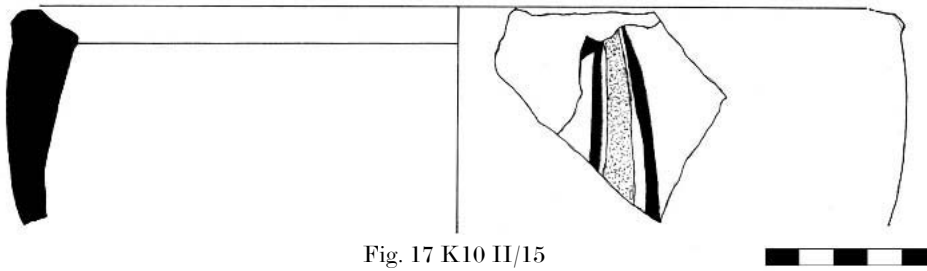


Fig. 17 K10 II/15

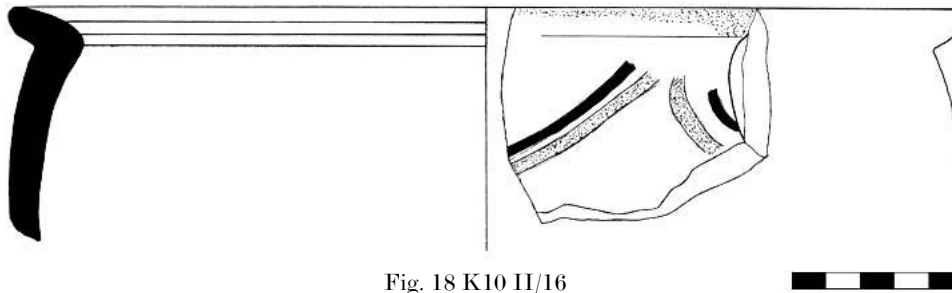


Fig. 18 K10 II/16

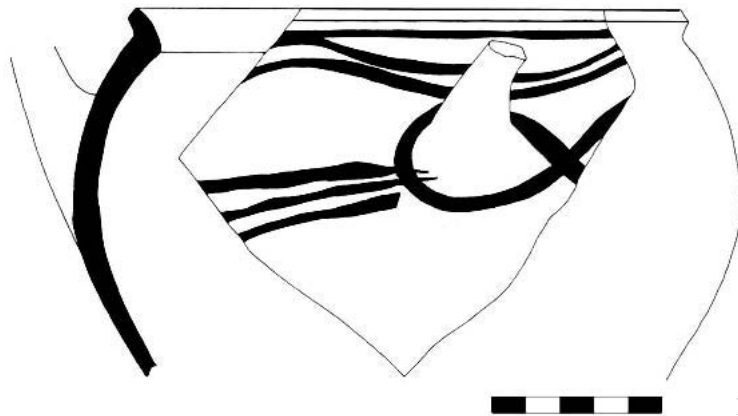
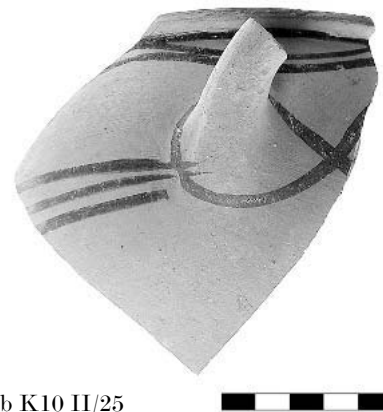


Fig. 19 a-b K10 II/25



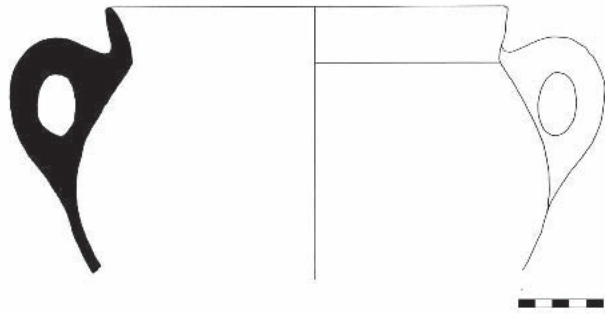


Fig. 21 a-b K13 II/20

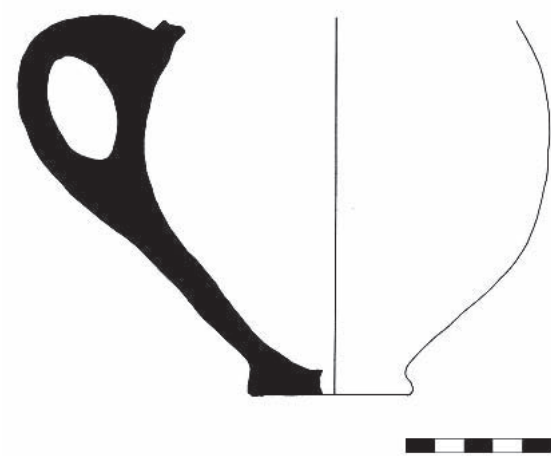


Fig. 22 a-b K8 II/10

Fig. 26 a-b K7 III/2

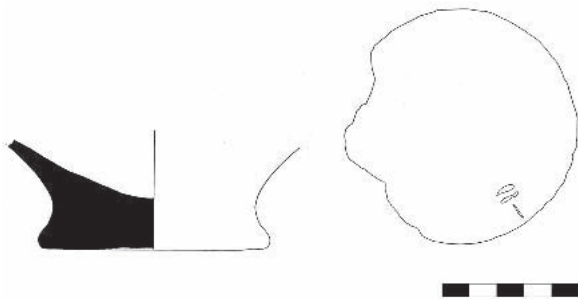


Fig. 23 a-b K7 II/95



Fig. 25 a-d K8 II

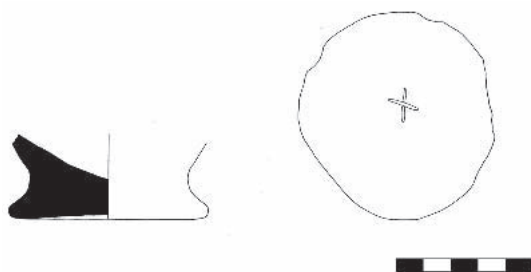


Fig. 24 a-b K7 II/96



