

AEGINETAN MATT-PAINTED POTTERY AT MIDDLE HELLADIC ASPIS, ARGOS

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INTRODUCTION

The pottery of Aeginetan provenance at Aspis in Argos belongs chiefly to two ceramic categories, matt-painted and coarse ware.¹ In the present paper we will examine the matt-painted Aeginetan pottery, one of the most characteristic and most attractive groups in the Aeginetan repertoire.

Toward the end of the 1970s, during conversation with Carol Zerner about the identification of Aeginetan matt-painted pottery, Gilles Touchais and I were quite puzzled to learn that a huge quantity of this ware had been found at Lerna. Our initial skepticism yielded shortly thereafter to surprise as we realized, during the course of the study of the material, that Aeginetan matt-painted pottery was present at Aspis in quite substantial amounts as well. In addition, a series of influential papers published in the early 1990s revealed that this phenomenon was not local in character: the presence of Aeginetan imported pottery was considerable not only in the northeast Peloponnese but also in most Middle Helladic (MH) sites of Mainland Greece and of several islands.² However, some of our initial questions remained: How was it possible to have such quantities of imported pottery outside Aegina? Was there on MH Aegina a ceramic production and exportation center of such large scale? And what meaning, or meanings, for a settlement are implied by this mass import of ceramics? Concerning the Aspis settlement in particular, a further question later arose, in the course of the study campaigns: Why do Aeginetan matt-painted ceramics appear with a greater frequency in the layer of the first MH occupation and decrease gradually thereafter,³ contrary to what happens at other MH sites?

Based upon examination of the Aspis Aeginetan matt-painted material, we will propose some answers

to these questions and will lay the basis for a discussion. First we shall look at the quantitative analysis of this pottery and its temporal distribution; next we shall discuss in more detail the range of shapes that are best represented. In the second part of the presentation an attempt will be made to interpret the reasons behind this impressive ceramic presence from Aegina as well as its quantitative variations through time. On the basis of the observed limited range of shapes and its physical characteristics, it is suggested that this pottery had a special function, perhaps with some symbolic connotations. It will also be argued that its abundance at the beginning of the period, as well as its gradual decrease, should be explained in socioeconomic terms.

THE DATA

1. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

It is unfortunately not possible to obtain precise data on the exact percentage of the Aeginetan matt-painted pottery recovered at Aspis. This is so for two main reasons. First, following practices that were current when the excavation began, the pottery was not conserved in its entirety; of the total number of matt-painted pottery fragments, approximately 7.5 percent have been conserved.⁴ Second, the presence of Aeginetan pottery was not recognized in the very early stages of excavation, with the result that a distinction between local and Aeginetan matt-painted wares was not made prior to the quantification of the entire ceramic assemblage⁵ and the selection of the material to be conserved. Therefore, all observations concerning the quantitative analysis refer exclusively to the registered material and consequently have no absolute value. The situation is not, however, entirely desperate since all diagnostic sherds (rims, handles,

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¹ G. TOUCHAIS, in the present volume.

² DIETZ 1991, 303–5, fig. 91; ZERNER 1993, 49–50, esp. n. 63;

RUTTER 1993b, 777, fig. 12; for a more recent study, see LINDBLOM 2001, 42–4, table 9.

³ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, esp. 37–40.

⁴ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 4.

⁵ Ceramic fragments intended to be thrown were counted, in accordance with an initial classification.

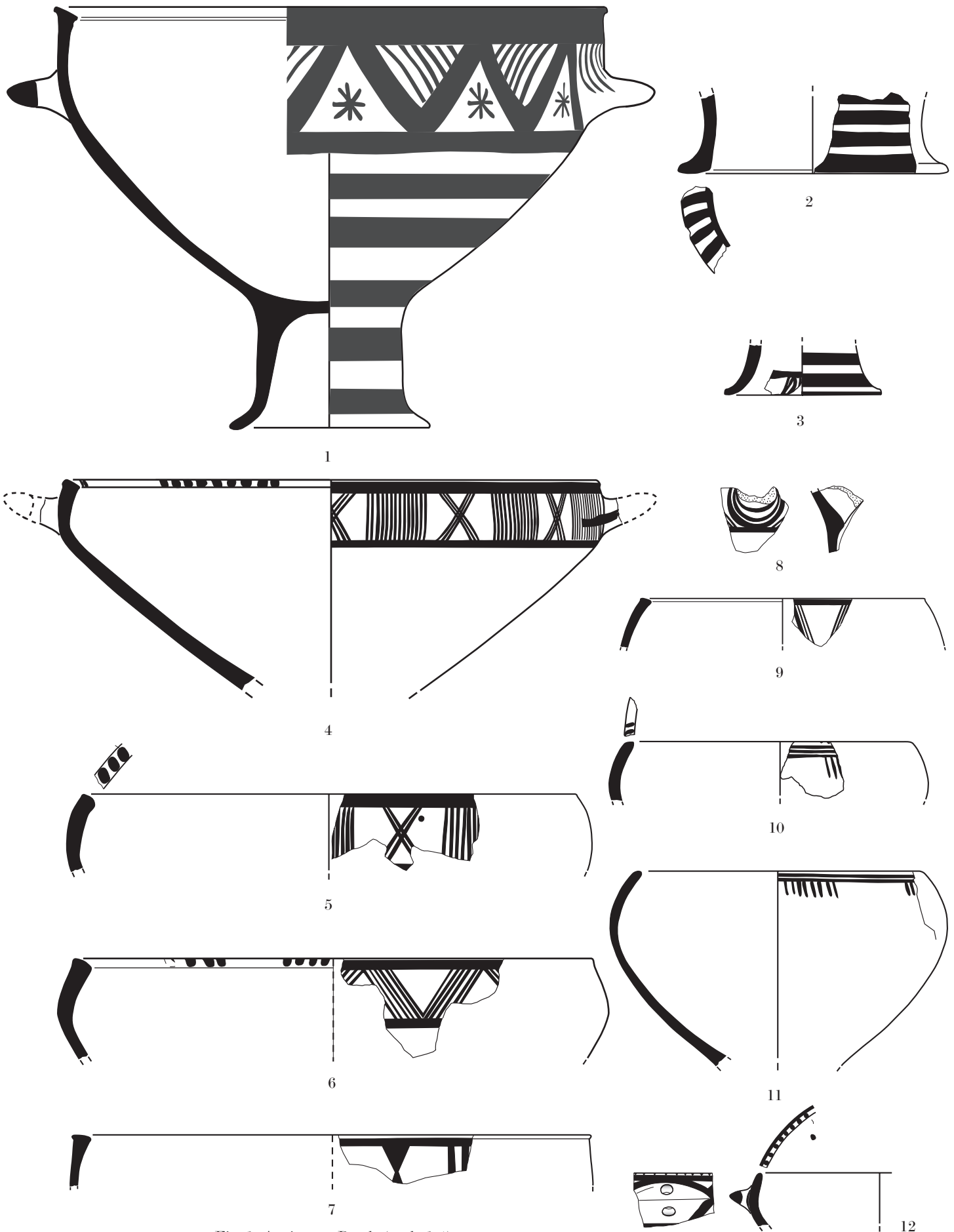


Fig. 1 Aeginetan Bowls (scale 1:4)

bases) have been preserved, allowing some approximate estimates regarding the number and the typology of vessels in the sample. On the basis of the catalogued material from the southeast sector, we may therefore suggest that Aeginetan wares comprise about 35 to 40 percent of the total matt-painted pottery. Apart from Lerna, where considerable amounts of Aeginetan matt-painted ware have been found,⁶ this is quite a notable quantity in comparison with that of other MH sites of the Peloponnese (e.g., Asine,⁷ Tsoungiza,⁸ Magoula Galata Troizinias⁹), Attica (e.g., Athens,¹⁰ Kiapha Thiti¹¹), Boeotia¹² and the Cyclades.¹³

Another element complicating the quantitative analysis of this pottery is connected with its technology.¹⁴ Although very characteristic in its gritty and semigritty version (porous clay, friable, yellowish or reddish colour, frequent appearance of gold mica), this pottery is not easy to differentiate macroscopically when dealing with fineware vessels made from well-levigated and well-fired clay. This difficulty is due mainly to the fact that the technological characteristics of this fine matt-painted class have not been precisely determined – for instance, the possibly different treatments of the vessels' surface.

2. TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION

The study of the ceramic material has revealed that Aeginetan matt-painted pottery is present throughout the three main occupation phases of the settlement.¹⁵ It is interesting to note however that this presence does not remain constant, but rather displays significant variation through time. In the earliest settlement phase of the MH period (Aspis phase II), corresponding to MH I–II, the number of Aeginetan matt-painted vessels seems to be, if not equal to, just slightly lower than that of the locally produced matt-painted vessels (roughly 1:1.5). Thereafter this percentage decreases dramatically: in the second MH phase of the settlement (Aspis phase

III), dated to MH IIIA, the ratio is about 1:4, while in the final MH phase (Aspis phase IV), dated to MH IIIB–LH IA, it falls even further, to about 1:8. Thus, there is a strong presence of Aeginetan wares in the first settlement phase at Aspis. After that, Aeginetan vessels not only decrease numerically, but also in percentage, as local production of pottery increases noticeably. We may compare, for example, the number of 35 rim fragments from Aeginetan matt-painted vessels and 55 locally produced rim fragments in the oldest MH level, as opposed to the 30 Aeginetan and some 280 rims of local manufacture in the third and final phases.

3. TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

We will now present an overview of the most common shapes of Aeginetan matt-painted vessels discovered at Aspis. It is chiefly based on the pottery from the southeast sector of the site, which has been fully catalogued (for the plan, see G. TOUCHAIS, in the present volume, fig. 1.IV).

A. Table ware

Bowl

Bowls (Figs. 1, 2) make up about one-third of the Aeginetan matt-painted vessels recovered in the southeast sector. They are mainly of large or medium size (rim diam. 40+ and ± 30 cm, respectively), and rarely smaller (rim diam. ± 20 cm). The shoulder is usually rounded, with a slightly inturned rim, and more rarely carinated with an everted rim.

Rounded profile. Among the large-sized bowls, a specimen with a fully extant profile and tall cylindrical foot stands out (Fig. 1.1, Pl. 1).¹⁶ Additional fragments of cylindrical bases make it apparent that this was not the only example of this type at Aspis (Fig. 1.2, 3). The decoration covers almost the entire surface of the vessel, being quite elaborate, and supplemented by stars, known from the early barrel-shaped

⁶ Although there are no precise data on percentages, it is estimated that imported vessels, a large part of which comprises wares from Aegina, make up perhaps as much as 40 percent of the total ceramic assemblage (ZERNER 1993, 45, 53 n. 28).

⁷ Gold mica matt-painted fabrics make up ca. 19 percent of the total material from the Barbouna area and somewhat less of the material from the levels of House B in the lower town (NORDQUIST 1987, 49–51; see also ZERNER 1993, 53 n. 28).

⁸ Very few Aeginetan sherds have been identified (RUTTER 1990, 421, 454).

⁹ KONSOLAKI-GIANNOPOULOU 2003, 162–4.

¹⁰ Classes I and IV (IMMERWAHR 1971, 62–3, 64–6) are very probably of Aeginetan origin.

¹¹ MARAN 1992, 188–95.

¹² See K. SARRI in the present volume.

¹³ See J. OVERBECK and I. NIKOLAKOPOULOU in this volume.

¹⁴ The technological aspects of this pottery will not be treated in detail here. On this topic see ZERNER 1978, 156–8; 1986, 64–6; 1993, 48–9; SIEDENTOPF 1991, 10–3; MARAN 1992, 188–9; RUTTER 1993, 73; COSMOPOULOS *et al.* 1999; LINDBLOM 2001, 34–5, 38–40; KILIKOGLU *et al.* 2003, 134.

¹⁵ On the habitation phases of Aspis, see PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 3.

¹⁶ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 7–10, no. 5.



Pl. 1 Aeginetan large bowl on pedestal foot



Pl. 2 Aeginetan large bowl



Pl. 3 Aeginetan bowl with potter's mark near the base

pithoi of Kolonna Stadt VII¹⁷ and Stadt IX.¹⁸ This bowl came to light in the earliest MH phase of the settlement (phase II), containing MH I and II material. Exact parallels from Lerna date to MH I,¹⁹ while published examples of cylindrical bases from Kolonna all come from Stadt IX.²⁰

Another large Aeginetan bowl with a largely extant profile (Figs. 1.4, Pl. 2) has a more angular shoulder, upon which there appears the classical metope decoration.²¹ This bowl, as well as quite a few fragments from similar vessels (Fig. 1.5–7), also dates to the earliest MH phase of the settlement. It should be noted that similar bowls, greater still in size, well preserved and of outstanding quality, have come to light in a MH grave recently excavated by the Greek Archaeological Service on the eastern foot of the hill of Aspis (Thanou property).²² At Kolonna, bowls of this type are already known in Stadt VII–VIII²³ but they become particularly popular in Stadt IX.²⁴

Deep bowls with channel or tubular spout were not common at Aspis, as only two fragments of spouts have been found. One of them (Fig. 1.8) belongs to the earliest MH phase (phase II), the other to the latest (phase IV). A rim fragment (Fig. 1.9) could also come from a bowl of this type. At Kolonna, spouted bowls are known from both the earliest phases (Stadt VII–VIII)²⁵ and the later ones (Stadt IX–X).²⁶ At Lerna, similar examples date to MH II.²⁷

Among the smaller-sized bowls of note is a group bowl with rounded shoulder and inturned rim, decorated with groups of small vertical lines hanging from two or three bands along the rim (Fig. 1.10, 11). The better preserved example (Fig. 1.11),²⁸ which retains an almost complete profile, has a potter's mark close to the base (Pl. 3). It belongs to phase II, along with the rest of bowls of the same type. Quite a few examples of this type have been published from Kolonna, dated to Stadt IX,²⁹ as well as from Lerna, dated to MH I–II.³⁰ Bowls with rounded shoulder and everted rim are rather rare at Aspis (Fig. 2.13 [phase II]), 14 [phase III]).

Carinated profile. Bowls with an angular shoulder and outturned rim are generally small to medium in

¹⁷ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 2.

¹⁸ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 6.

¹⁹ ZERNER 1988, fig. 6.16.

²⁰ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 35 and pls. 87, 88 (Ständer grosser Schüsseln).

²¹ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 7–10, no. 8.

²² PAPP (forthcoming).

²³ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 33–5, pls. 79, 80. At Lerna they also appear as early as MH I: ZERNER 1988, figs. 5.14, 6.15.

²⁴ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 33–5, pls. 80–5 (Grosse Schüsseln mit abgesetztem Rand).

²⁵ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 31–2, pls. 73, 74.

²⁶ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pls. 74–7.

²⁷ ZERNER 1988, fig. 7.

²⁸ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 7–10, no. 3.

²⁹ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 32, pl. 78.409–12.

³⁰ ZERNER 1988, fig. 5.9, 10.

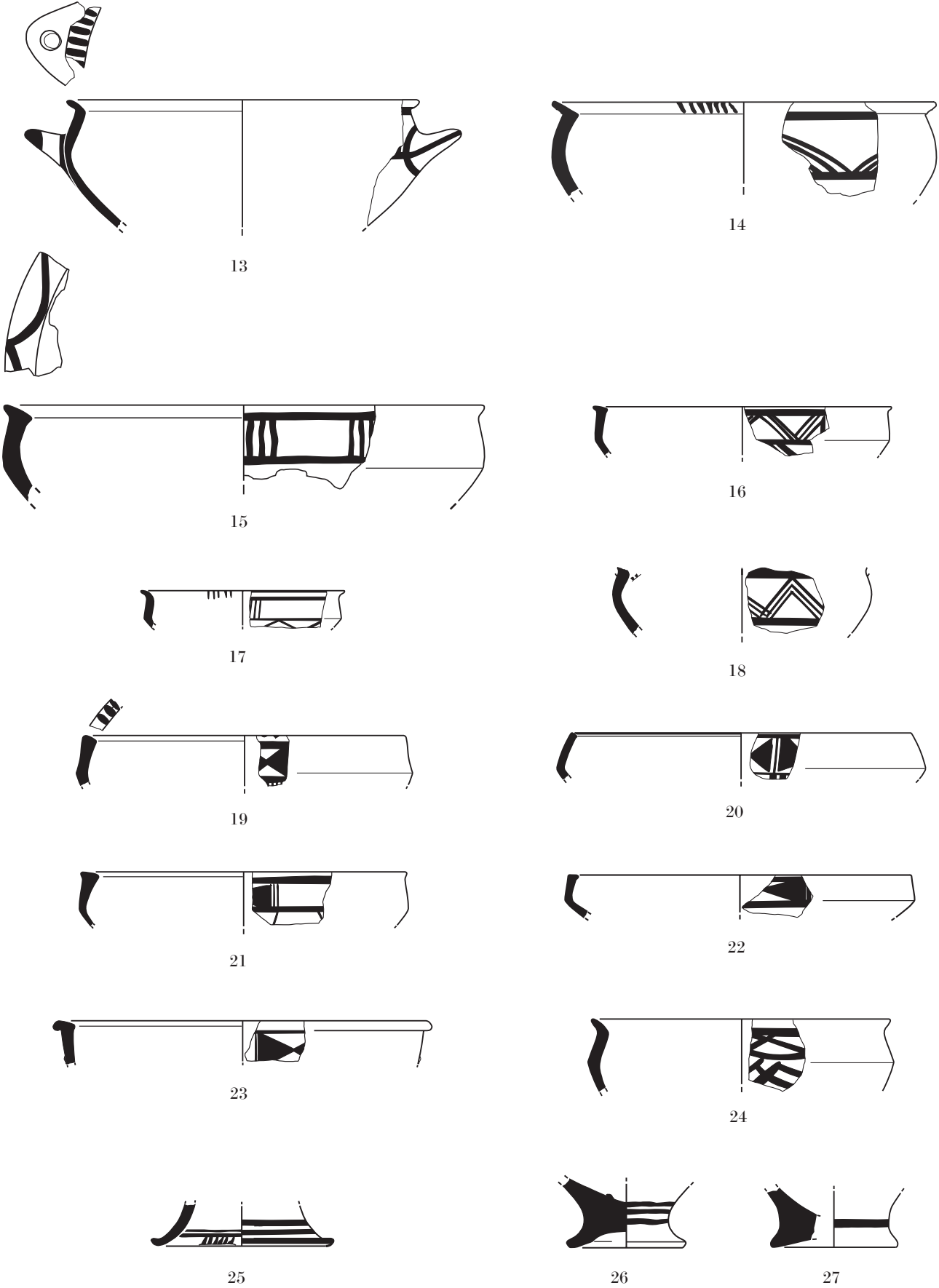


Fig. 2 Aeginetan Bowls and Goblet (scale 1:4)



Pl. 4 Goblets of local, argive production

size (Fig. 2.15–23). They may stand on a pedestal foot (Fig. 2.25).³¹ The carinated bowl of Aeginetan origin is relatively rare at Aspis.³² Most of the examples are of a very fine fabric (well-levigated and well-fired clay) and carefully decorated with lozenges and butterflies; this second motif is rather popular at Aspis (Fig. 2.19–23). Three published examples from the earlier excavations on the hill,³³ also decorated with this motif, are possibly of Aeginetan provenance. Chronologically this type of bowl seems to be later than the

previous one; most of the carinated examples from Aspis come from the final phase of the settlement. The fact that bowls of this type are abundant at Kolonna Stadt IX,³⁴ making them contemporary to bowls with inturned rim – which at Aspis seem to be more popular earlier – raises a problem of synchronism between the two settlements. An Aeginetan example with butterflies from Lerna is dated to MH II.³⁵

Goblet

We have already mentioned that among the numerous examples of goblets found at Aspis (Pl. 4) – exclusively in the southeast sector – not a single one is of Aeginetan origin.³⁶ Still, the ongoing study of the material suggests that there may be some very rare examples, such as the rim fragment illustrated here (Fig. 2.24) and some low foot fragments that also belong to this type of vessel (Fig. 2.26, 27). Goblets with small vertical strap handles on the shoulder are rare in Aegina as well.³⁷ In Lerna, imported Aeginetan goblets seem also to be very rare.³⁸

Basin

Relatively rare at Aspis is the type of shallow basin (rim diam. ± 40 cm) with conical body and a more or less pronounced rim (Fig. 3.28, 29).³⁹ Parallels from

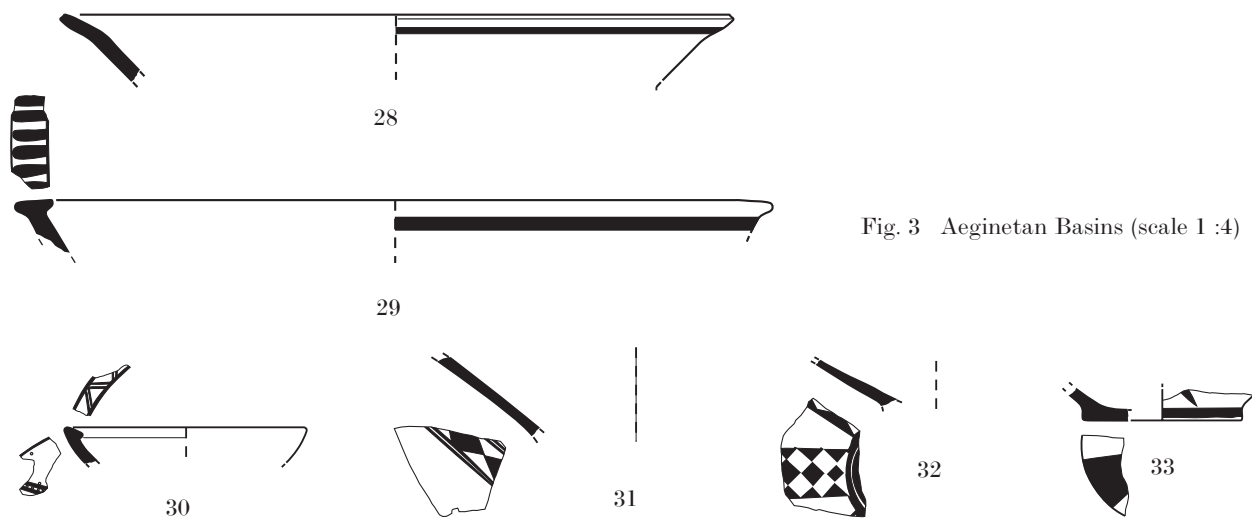


Fig. 3 Aeginetan Basins (scale 1 :4)

³¹ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 89.

³² Eight rim sherds in the southeast sector, the same number in the north sector.

³³ VOLLGRAFF 1906, 28, figs. 47–9.

³⁴ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 35–7, pls. 89–95.

³⁵ ZERNER 1988, fig. 4.4.

³⁶ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 18.

³⁷ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 90.505, perhaps also pl. 95.572.

³⁸ One certain example is published by ZERNER (1988, fig. 4.8 [MH III/LH I]).

³⁹ Some 10 samples in the southeast sector and as many in the north sector.

Kolonna⁴⁰ suggest that some of the examples supposed to be “basins” may have functioned as pithos lids.⁴¹ Most of the examples from Aspis come from the earliest phase (II) of the settlement, and only some of them from phase III. A small conical cup of fine fabric seems to be a miniature version of this basin (Fig. 3.30); it may also have been used as a lid.

Two body fragments of very fine fabric, bearing an elaborate decoration (Fig. 3.31, 32), have close parallels to the “kalathoi” found during the earlier excavations at Aspis.⁴² A parallel from Kolonna is considered to be a lid.⁴³ The illustrated base fragment (Fig. 3.33) comes probably from a vessel of this type.

Cup

Cups of Aeginetan provenance have not been found in great numbers at Aspis (Fig. 4.34–44). A very small semi-globular cup with everted rim and high tubular handle (Fig. 4.34) was found in a grave outside the apsidal building.⁴⁴ Dated to MH II, on the basis of the Aspis stratigraphy and parallels from Lerna and Asine,⁴⁵ this cup is probably of Aeginetan provenance. Three illustrated specimens of semiglobular cups with linear decoration (Fig. 4.35–7)⁴⁶ come

from phase III and have exact parallels at Kolonna Stadt IX.⁴⁷ Two other cups from phase IV, decorated with a frieze of small festoons, are very probably of Aeginetan origin, too (Fig. 4.38, 39); although without parallels among the published material from Kolonna, they might have been among the latest imports from Aegina. The small rim fragment (Fig. 4.40) belongs to a cup or to a kantharos.

It is also probable that some of the rare fine straight-sided cups at Aspis⁴⁸ (Fig. 4.41–4) are of Aeginetan provenance. They all come from the final phase of the settlement (phase IV).

Kantharos

Aeginetan kantharoi of semigritty fabric are very rare at Aspis. In contrast, most of the kantharoi of fine fabric are probably Aeginetan in origin (Fig. 5.45–53),⁴⁹ although as was noted above, this is not always easy to confirm macroscopically. These fine and carefully decorated “Aeginetan” kantharoi, spread throughout the three occupational phases of the site, occurred in highest number in the oldest level.⁵⁰ Most of them are similar to the type B of Kolonna, dating to Stadt VII–VIII and IX (Fig.

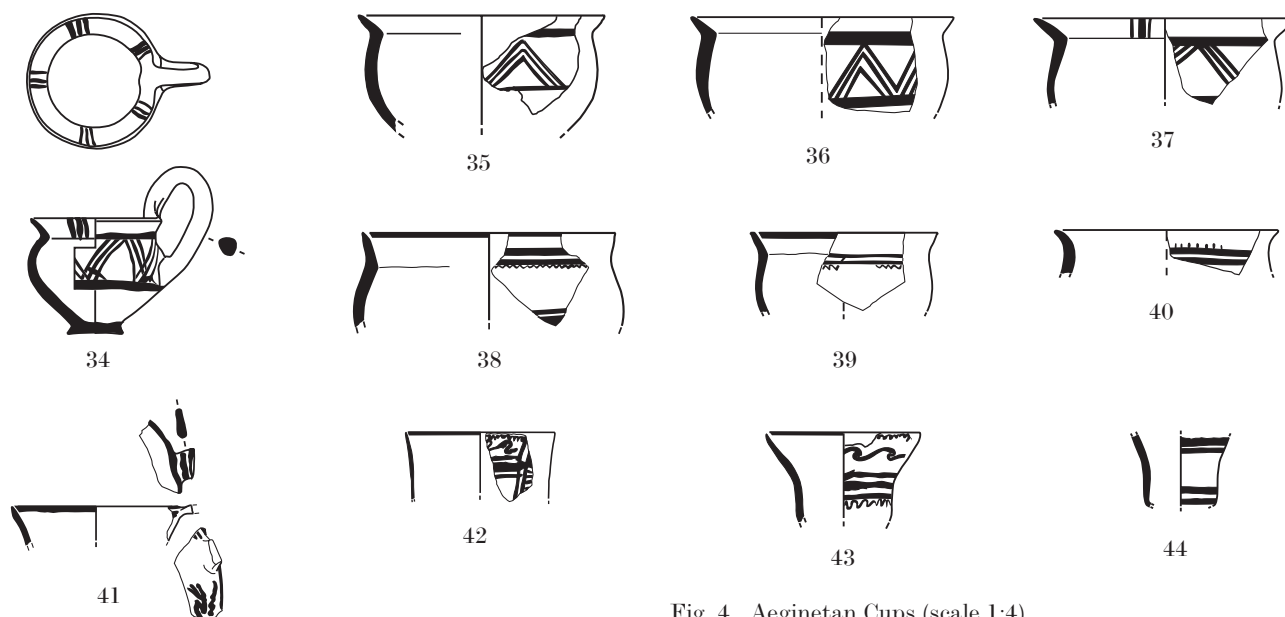


Fig. 4 Aeginetan Cups (scale 1:4)

⁴⁰ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 43, pl. 118.794–800 (Teller).

⁴¹ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 22.104.

⁴² VOLLGRAFF 1906, 27, fig. 45.

⁴³ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 55.257.

⁴⁴ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 22, no. 58.

⁴⁵ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 22 n. 95.

⁴⁶ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 22, no. 59.

⁴⁷ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 38, pl. 102.

⁴⁸ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 22–33, nos. 63–5.

⁴⁹ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 11.

⁵⁰ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 12.

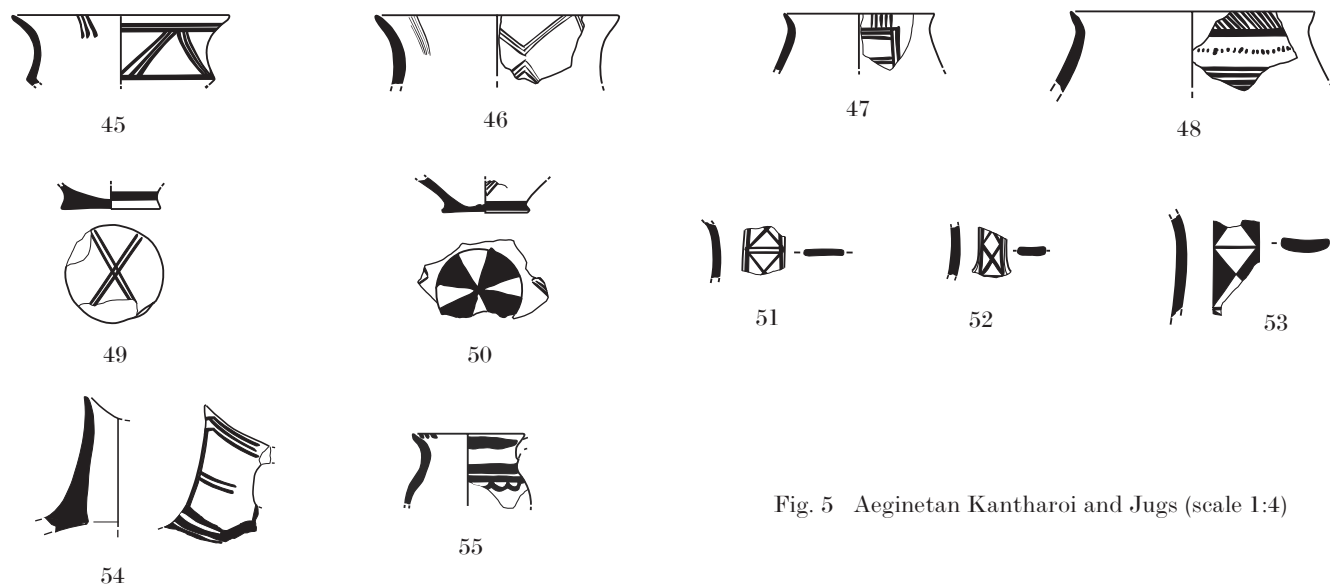
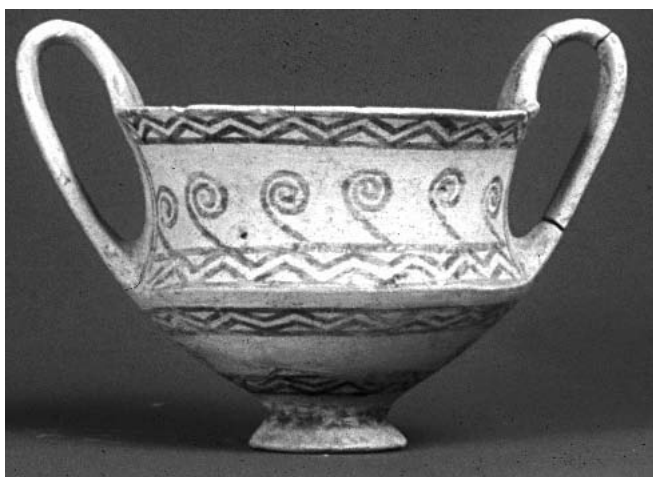


Fig. 5 Aeginetan Kantharoi and Jugs (scale 1:4)

5.45, 46).⁵¹ Two rim fragments (Fig. 5.47, 48) have exact parallels in Kolonna type A examples dating to Stadt IX.⁵² They come from Aspis phase II and III.

An outstanding example of a fineware Aeginetan kantharos with elaborate decoration (Pl. 5) comes from a MH cremation pit excavated in 1967 at the Aphrodision of Argos.⁵³ It is not surprising that such an exceptional tomb as this contained a vessel of

such finesse. Stylistically (syntax, spiral motif) the kantharos should be dated to the extreme end of the MH period, as noted by the excavator. Its Aeginetan origin is confirmed by the presence of gold mica in the clay. Also of note is the motif of the double zigzag line popular at Kolonna from very early (Stadt VII–VIII⁵⁴ and Stadt IX⁵⁵). This decorative motif is also found on several fragments of fine kantharoi from Aspis (Pls. 6, 7).



Pl. 5 Aeginetan kantharos from the Aphrodision of Argos



Pl. 6 Fine kantharos with elaborate decoration



Pl. 7 Fine kantharos with elaborate decoration

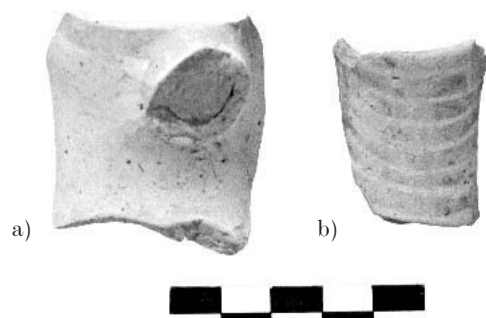
⁵¹ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 39–40, pls. 111–6.

⁵² SIEDENTOPF 1991, 38–9, pls. 107.675–9, 108.680–2, 109.695, 696; see also IMMERWAHR 1971, pl. 23.336.

⁵³ DAUX 1968, 1037, fig. 31.

⁵⁴ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 114.737.

⁵⁵ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 115.741–3.



Pl. 8 Aeginetan jugs

Jug

The majority of jugs discovered at Aspis belong to the beaked type. Examples of Aeginetan origin are very rare and fragmentary.⁵⁶ A well-preserved example that could have been of Aeginetan origin is distantly related to material from Stadt IX (Fig. 5.54).⁵⁷ The fragment of a spout decorated with multiple horizontal lines (Pl. 8b) has close similarities to a jug from Stadt X.⁵⁸ The Aeginetan specimens found at Aspis seem to have been more carefully manufactured and more elaborately decorated than the local ones, and date to phases III and IV of the settlement.

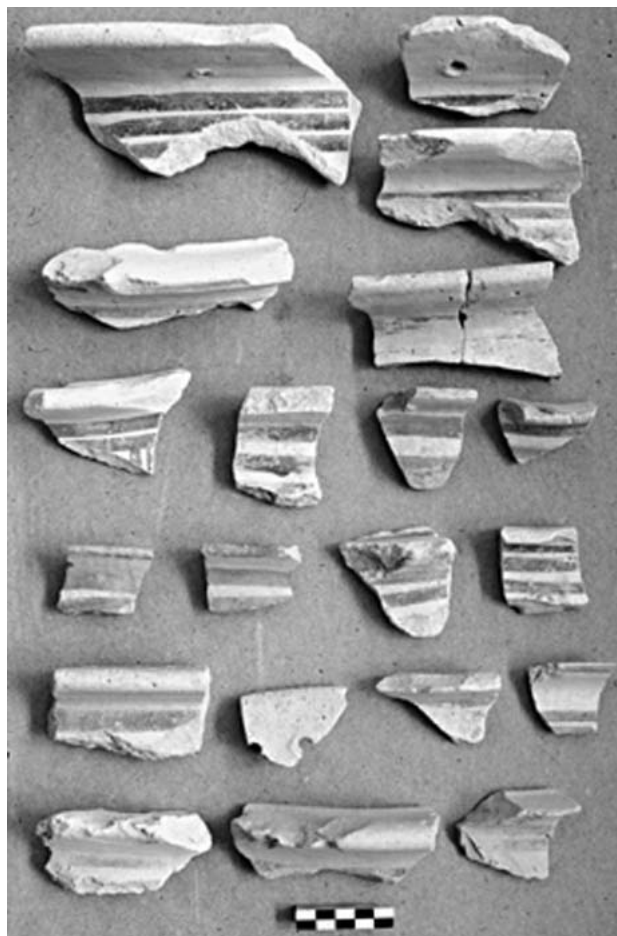
Of note is the possible Aeginetan origin of a small closed fineware vessel (Fig. 5.55), likely a ewer, coming from phase III. Its decoration, a frieze of small festoons, dates no earlier than MH IIIA. There is no parallel with a comparable decoration in the published material from Kolonna. This vessel must have been one of the latest that arrived from Aegina.

B. Storage and transport vessels

Pithoid jars from Aegina enjoyed perhaps the widest diffusion and the greatest popularity in the Aegean area.

Barrel jar

Of the 28 rim fragments of barrel jars found in the southeast sector, 21 are of Aeginetan origin (Figs. 6.56–8, Pl. 9). The only partially restored Aeginetan specimen (Fig. 6.56), of rather small size, comes from the earliest occupational phase⁵⁹ of Aspis and its dec-



Pl. 9 Rims of Aeginetan barrel jars

oration presents close similarities to a jar from Kolonna Stadt VIII.⁶⁰ Most Aeginetan barrel jars at Aspis come from the oldest MH phase.⁶¹ This early date is confirmed moreover by the decoration on many body fragments (Pl. 10), very characteristic of the barrel jars from Kolonna Stadt VIII and IX (dense decoration, stars, net patterns). Many body fragments belonging to a single barrel jar,⁶² probably of Aeginetan provenance, bear an elaborate decoration with parallels at Kolonna Stadt IX (Pl. 11).⁶³ Jars with a more simple and linear decoration⁶⁴ are found in the two more recent phases of Aspis (III and IV); they are more often manufactured of local clay and are very probably imitations of Aeginetan prototypes.

⁵⁶ No more than three or four have been identified in the southeast sector (out of a total of some 30 vases) and as many in the north sector. At Lerna, the Aeginetan jugs must have been equally rare since ZERNER presents only one example (ZERNER 1988, fig. 9.27), dating probably to MH II.

⁵⁷ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pls. 64–7.

⁵⁸ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 69.343.

⁵⁹ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 25–6, no. 71.

⁶⁰ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 3.4.

⁶¹ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 25–6.

⁶² This barrel jar was found in a level with mixed material.

⁶³ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pls. 11–3.

⁶⁴ Reminiscent of the decorations of barrel jars from Kolonna Stadt X; see SIEDENTOPF 1991, pls. 15–8.

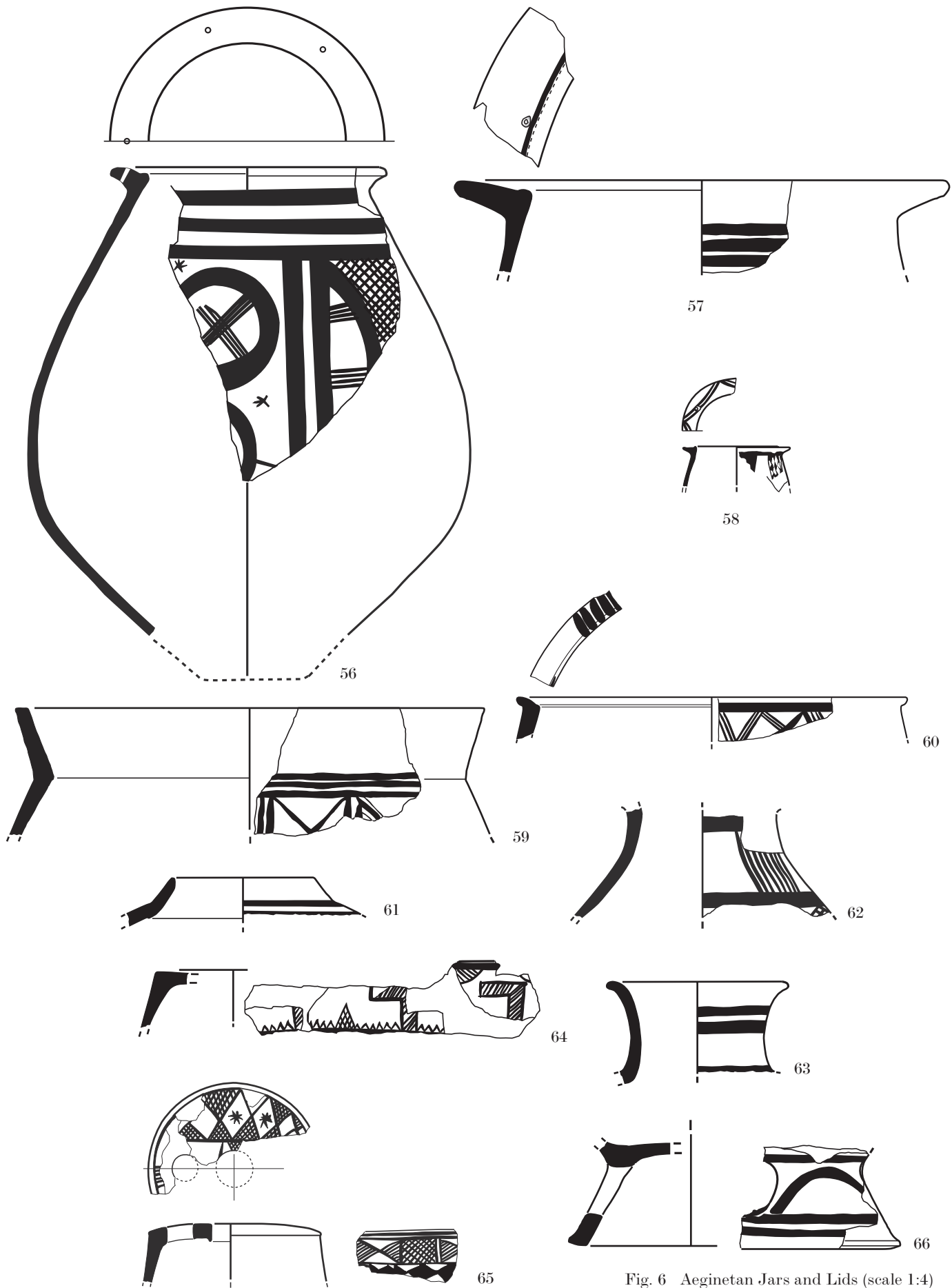
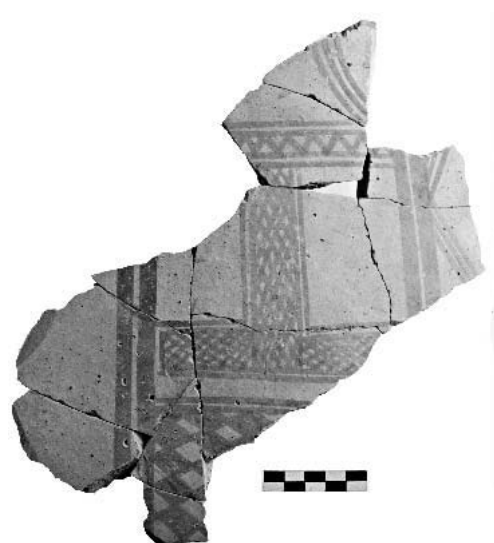


Fig. 6 Aeginetan Jars and Lids (scale 1:4)



Pl. 10 Body fragments of Aeginetan barrel jars



Pl. 11 Aeginetan (?) barrel jar with elaborate decoration

A miniature example from Aspis phase III (Fig. 6.58) has parallels in the material of Lerna dating to MH II.⁶⁵

Wide-mouthed jar

The wide-mouthed jar (Fig. 6.59, 60) with outturned rim and ovoid body is less common at Aspis than the barrel jar. Of the 15 rim fragments discovered in the southeast sector, roughly half are made of Aeginetan clay.⁶⁶ These Aeginetan vessels appear in both the earlier phase and the two later ones. This fact is not par-

ticularly impressive since at Kolonna the vessels of this type date to Stadt IX⁶⁷ and X.⁶⁸ At Lerna, Aeginetan wide-mouthed jars appear during MH I later⁶⁹ and at Asine during MH II.⁷⁰ At Aspis, all the locally produced specimens come from the later phases (III and mainly IV), as is the case with the barrel jar.

Hole-mouthed jar

Only one specimen of the five or six hole-mouthed jars that came to light in the southeast sector is of Aeginetan manufacture (Fig. 6.61).⁷¹ It is likewise the only one to belong to the earliest level of the MH occupation, whereas the others, locally produced, come from the final phase (IV). At Kolonna, the two published instances are dated to the earlier phases (Stadt VII–VIII).⁷² Lerna has produced a comparable Aeginetan example with a low, cylindrical rim,⁷³ but the type is better known from the range of shapes of the Lustrous Decorated pottery.⁷⁴

High-necked amphora with plastic decoration

Some four or five body fragments, found in the southeast sector, come very probably from the same closed vessel, a rather small-sized jar with elaborate painted and plastic decoration (Pl. 12). At Kolonna, this type of decoration is associated with a very particular amphora with a tall, wide neck and a flaring rim. This type of amphora appears in Stadt VII but is more common in Stadt VIII and IX.⁷⁵ It is very likely, then, that the Aspis fragments, which were discovered in the



Pl. 12 Amphora with plastic decoration

⁶⁵ ZERNER 1988, fig. 12.35, 36.

⁶⁶ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 26.

⁶⁷ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pls. 25.110, 26, 27.117–9.

⁶⁸ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 27.120–3.

⁶⁹ ZERNER 1978, 157; 1988, 3, figs. 10.28, 11.30.

⁷⁰ For references, see PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 28, n. 124.

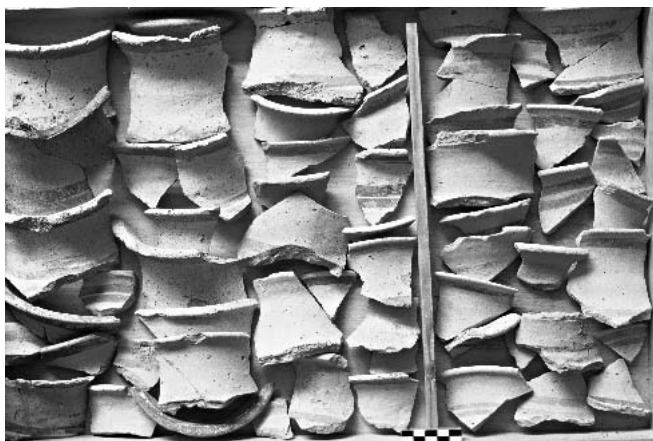
⁷¹ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 31–2, no. 85.

⁷² SIEDENTOPF 1991, 24, pl. 34.

⁷³ ZERNER 1988, fig. 15.45.

⁷⁴ ZERNER 1988, figs. 33, 34.

⁷⁵ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 21–4, pls. 28–33 (Bogenrippenamphoren).



Pl. 13 Closed Jars of local (left) and Aeginetan (right) fabric

earliest habitation phase, belong to a small-sized amphora of this type.⁷⁶

Narrow-necked jar

On the basis of their neck shape, the narrow-necked jars can be distinguished into two variations, the type with flaring rim and the type with cylindrical neck, or amphora.

1. The narrow-necked jar with flaring rim and piriform or ovoid body is particularly popular at Kolonna Stadt IX;⁷⁷ some examples of larger size are well known from their unique decoration of ships and armed men.⁷⁸ At Aspis, this type of jar manufactured from Aeginetan clay is very rare, represented by only two neck fragments from the oldest phase (Fig. 6.62).⁷⁹ It is far more common in the Lustrous Painted version.⁸⁰ At Lerna, the Aeginetan jars of this type are much more numerous and are assigned to MH I;⁸¹ this date might be considered rather early, if indeed at Kolonna this jar does not appear before Stadt IX (MH II).⁸²

2. The jar with cylindrical neck (Fig. 6.63) is definitely more common at Aspis, where it is represented by some 20 neck fragments of Aeginetan provenance (Pl. 13, right side of the drawer).⁸³ Most of these specimens were found in the earliest habitation level, but

⁷⁶ This type is also known from a well-preserved example at Eutresis (GOLDMAN 1931, fig. 203, pl. XIII).

⁷⁷ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 27 (Amphoren Gruppe B), pls. 49–53.

⁷⁸ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 24–5, pls. 35–8.

⁷⁹ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 30–1, no. 82.

⁸⁰ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2003, 19–24.

⁸¹ ZERNER 1988, figs. 13, 14.

⁸² SIEDENTOPF 1991, 27, 45.

⁸³ In comparison with the jars manufactured in local clay (some 25 rim fragments: fig. 18, left side of the drawer), the



Pl. 14 Fragment of Aeginetan conical lid

many of them are also present in the later layers (phases III and IV). This type of jar is therefore among the few Aeginetan vessels that were imported continuously at Aspis, in relatively large numbers, until the end of the MH period. At Kolonna this type is diachronic, appearing as early as Stadt VII–VIII,⁸⁴ but more common during Stadt IX⁸⁵ and Stadt X.⁸⁶ The Aspis examples present exact parallels to the material of these latter Aegina phases.

Lid

Four examples of cylindrical pithos lids of Aeginetan manufacture have been found in the southeast sector of Aspis.⁸⁷ Two of them preserve a nearly intact profile (Fig. 6.64, 65); their small diameter (13 cm) suggests that they might have been used to cover hole-mouthed jars or narrow-necked jars with flaring rim. Two holes on the upper part of one of them (Fig. 6.65) were probably destined to receive a handle, similar to that of an example from Kolonna.⁸⁸ All these Aeginetan lids come from the earliest MH phase of the Aspis settlement. Exact parallels – that is, small-sized examples of a similar cylindrical form – are very rare from Kolonna, at least among the published material, and their dating has not been precisely determined.⁸⁹ However, the elaborate decorative repertoire of the Aspis specimens has very close similarities to that of the jars from Kolonna Stadt IX.⁹⁰ The early dating of these lids is also indicated by the synchronic presence, at

Aeginetan specimens carry a more standardized decoration (PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 28–30, no. 78).

⁸⁴ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 39.

⁸⁵ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pls. 40–5.

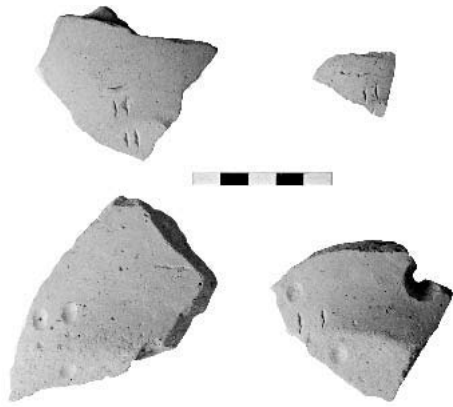
⁸⁶ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pls. 46–8.

⁸⁷ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 35–6.

⁸⁸ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 54.256a.

⁸⁹ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 28 (Gruppe B) and pl. 54; on their dating, see also PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 36 n. 172.

⁹⁰ SIEDENTOPF 1991, e.g., pls. 30.136, 33.150–4.



Pl. 15 Aeginetan Potmarks, North sector



Pl. 16 Aeginetan Potmarks, South-eastern sector

Aspis as at Lerna, of an identical type of vessel in the category of Lustrous Painted pottery.⁹¹

Only one fragment has been identified as belonging to a deep conical lid similar to those of type C from Kolonna (Pl. 14).⁹² Its decoration presents very close affinities to a specimen from Kolonna⁹³ and to a fragment found during the earlier excavations at Aspis.⁹⁴

Pierced stand

Finally, we can mention the only example of a pierced stand of Aeginetan provenance, belonging to a closed vessel (Fig. 6.66).⁹⁵ Exact comparanda from Lerna are dated to MH II–III,⁹⁶ while those from Kolonna are from Stadt IX.⁹⁷ The pierced stand from the Aspis came to light in the uppermost MH level, which frequently contains mixed material.

Potters' marks

Before closing the presentation of data, I will refer briefly to the potters' marks appearing on the Aeginetan matt-painted vessels from Aspis. The only certain matt-painted vessel bearing a potmark is the bowl with inturned rim referred to above (p. 100) (Fig. 1.11, Pl. 3). Of the 31 further vessel fragments with potmarks,⁹⁸ seven are from Aeginetan "plainware" vessels (Pls. 15, 16). However, since the pot-

marks always appear on or near the base of the pots – which in the case of matt-painted vessels is very rarely decorated – it is probable that some (if not all) of these seven "plainware" fragments belong in fact to matt-painted vessels.⁹⁹ Most of them belong to closed shapes – only two belong to open vessels – and come from the first occupation phase of the settlement. The execution and positioning of the marks follow the patterns known from other sites.¹⁰⁰ As to the signs of the marks themselves, all but two (Pl. 16, top left and right) were previously known.¹⁰¹

DISCUSSION

Synchronisms

After this survey of the Aeginetan matt-painted vessels found at Aspis, and before we turn to a discussion of the questions raised in the introduction, I would like to make some observations concerning the synchronisms between the occupational phases at Kolonna and at Aspis.

In the earliest level of Aspis (phase II), the pottery of Aeginetan production dates exclusively to Kolonna Stadt VII/VIII (mainly VIII) and IX (MH I late and II). This may be a clear indication that the first settlement of Aspis is their contemporary and

⁹¹ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2003, 31–2; ZERNER 1988, fig. 29.13–5.

⁹² SIEDENTOPF 1991, 28–9 (Deckel Gruppe C) and pls. 55–8.

⁹³ SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 55.258.

⁹⁴ VOLLGRAFF 1906, 26, fig. 40.

⁹⁵ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 35.

⁹⁶ ZERNER 1988, fig. 9.25, 26.

⁹⁷ SIEDENTOPF 1991, 35, pl. 88.

⁹⁸ In addition to the 7 on plainware (MC2), there are 3 on red-slipped ware (MR2), 5 on coarse cooking ware (GR2), and 16 on Lustrous Decorated ware (PL). We note also that of

the total 32 potmarks, 13 come from the southeast sector and 19 from the north sector of the excavation.

⁹⁹ LINDBLOM (2001, 34–5) considers matt-painted and plain ware as one group.

¹⁰⁰ Executed before firing, consisting of shallow oval or circular depressions and/or incised short lines, placed on the base or the lower part of the body; see LINDBLOM 2001, 45–7.

¹⁰¹ Without parallels in Lindblom's corpus of potmarks (LINDBLOM 2001, 48–50).

that its destruction is to be placed no later than the end of MH II.¹⁰²

In the second MH level of Aspis (phase III), where parallels with the Grave Circles at Mycenae have been recorded (mainly Circle B),¹⁰³ Aeginetan material from Kolonna Stadt IX (MH II) is again present, beside pottery dated to Kolonna Stadt X (MH IIIA). The presence of material from Kolonna Stadt IX does not constitute a problem if the first settlement of Aspis was not destroyed at the very end of MH II, but rather somewhat before. Consequently, the second MH phase of Aspis should be placed between the expiring Kolonna Stadt IX and Kolonna Stadt X¹⁰⁴ – perhaps more particularly before the end of the latter.

The latest habitation level at Aspis (phase IV), dated to MH IIIB–LH IA,¹⁰⁵ contains Aeginetan material mainly from Kolonna Stadt X, but also from Stadt IX. The presence of Stadt X pottery should indicate that the final phase of Aspis begins before the end of Stadt X. Nevertheless a problem of synchronism is revealed by the presence, in this same level, of Aeginetan ware dated to Stadt IX. If the presence of this early material is not merely a question of survival, it would indicate the continued production of certain Aeginetan pottery types (such as the bowls with angular shoulder and outturned rim), probably because of their popularity, at least “abroad”. If the further pottery study on Aegina confirms that these ceramic types, characteristic of Stadt IX, are not also present at Kolonna Stadt X, we could suggest that they were produced perhaps only for exportation.

Let us now discuss the two questions raised in the introduction, concerning: (1) the large quantity of Aeginetan matt-painted pottery at Aspis, and (2) the variations in its temporal distribution.

Quantity of imported Aeginetan matt-painted pottery

The large quantity of Aeginetan matt-painted ware at Aspis is probably not independent of the general

popularity and the widespread distribution of this ware.¹⁰⁶ This great popularity must be connected with the special physical characteristics and the possible specific uses of this ware, making the Aeginetan vessels unique and desirable.

A. Physical characteristics

Decoration: With their rich and elaborate decoration, Aeginetan vessels were obviously very attractive. As already observed elsewhere, the decorative technique of the Aeginetan ceramics at Aspis is characterized by a remarkable precision and by a greater inventiveness than the local production.¹⁰⁷ It has been noticed, in addition, that some Aeginetan pottery types are associated with a particular ornamentation.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the aesthetic aspect must have constituted one of the reasons for the widespread demand and distribution of this pottery. We could even suggest that through the wide distribution of these products, the Aeginetan workshop might have influenced contemporary aesthetics and, in a sense, might have imposed the canonical expression of the “beautiful”. This proposal is reinforced by the fact that imitations of Aeginetan pottery are produced, in relatively great quantities, by the local Argive workshop, particularly from the middle of the period.¹⁰⁹

Technology: In spite of the high aesthetic quality of the vessels, success would not have been possible without a good and consistent quality of manufacture. Microscopic analyses of the clay, both chemical and petrographic,¹¹⁰ reveal, in fact, that the Aeginetan ceramics exhibit consistent technological characteristics, which testify to a standardized and specialized production. This technological superiority (appropriate levigation, constancy in clay composition, controlled firing conditions, standardized shapes), in combination with the volcanic nature of the clay, would have given the vessels a particular durability and suitability for their desired use (e.g., providing stable conditions for the storage of food-stuffs).

¹⁰² Concerning the Minoan connection, the terminus post quem of this phase is marked by the presence of some “minoanizing” material with parallels to MM IA (PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2003, 10–2, 34), whereas its terminus ante quem is marked by the appearance of some rare ceramics imitating the Kamares style (*ibid.*, 25, 34).

¹⁰³ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, *passim*.

¹⁰⁴ It is worth noting that some characteristic traits of the early Shaft Graves ceramic repertoire, such as the frieze of small festoons, are not present among the published material of Kolonna Stadt X, dating traditionally to MH IIIA, and

therefore contemporary with Aspis phase III. If there is not a problem of synchronism, is this because such elements are simply lacking among the Kolonna Stadt X material, or because this material is not yet fully published?

¹⁰⁵ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 3, 39.

¹⁰⁶ See n. 2 above.

¹⁰⁷ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 38.

¹⁰⁸ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 6 and n. 14.

¹⁰⁹ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 31.

¹¹⁰ See n. 10 above.

In summary, the physical characteristics of the Aeginetan pottery clearly proclaim the workshops' specialization and largely explain the popularity of their products.

B. Use and function

In order to address the possible use(s) of these “καλλὰ κ'ἄγαθὰ” imported Aeginetan vessels and the potential needs that they may have filled, it is necessary to examine the basic repertoire of their shapes.

On the basis of the Aeginetan matt-painted material presented above we can establish that while the repertoire of shapes may appear at first glance to be wide, it is essentially rather limited since some types of vessels occur very rarely, suggesting that they were not imported regularly.¹¹¹ The most frequently represented shapes in the Aspis assemblage are bowls, barrel jars and narrow-necked jars, while cups, kantharoi and jugs are exceedingly rare. Thus, the imported vessels belong most commonly to the category of storage vessels, but belong also to that of table wares.

The large number of Aeginetan matt-painted storage vessels suggests storage need, but not so much an increased need for storage in general as for storage differentiation. Using containers of high aesthetic and specialized technology indicates a specialization in storage management – that is, the use of specific vessels for specific products. Moreover, it indicates a desire to display the storage of these specific products, which should have had some special value. It would follow that these imported Aeginetan vessels not only covered simple economic needs, but also filled a complex function with social and symbolic dimensions.

The rather large number of necked jars likewise indicates similar needs for display and differentiation in the transport and storage of liquid products. If, as it has been suggested, the Aeginetan amphoras were employed for the transport and storage of water,¹¹² it is probable that this practice was connected with exceptional circumstances, such as feasts and ceremonies.

Bowls most likely saw multiple uses, with a definite emphasis on serving. The Aeginetan bowls, due to their large size and elaborate decoration, were probably not destined for daily use within the family context, but rather for larger and exceptional gather-

ings. It is hard, for example, to imagine that the large and fragile bowl on a pedestal foot from Aspis (Fig. 1.1, Pl. 1) would not have been kept with special care and reserved for special occasions only.

Consequently, for the three basic types of imported Aeginetan matt-painted vessels, the data lead us to suggest not a daily but rather a formal use with very probably a symbolic character. These vessels were perhaps desired not only for their aesthetic and technological perfection,¹¹³ but also for function as prestige objects during communal manifestations of a likely ritual nature.

Temporal distribution of the imported Aeginetan matt-painted pottery

Aspis phase II (MHI-II)

We have shown above that, according to the data from the ceramic analysis, the presence of Aeginetan matt-painted pottery is much more pronounced in the first settlement phase of Aspis. A possible explanation for this phenomenon may be sought in a need for high-quality painted pottery, which the local production could not cover at this early stage, probably due to a lack of appropriate technical infrastructure or technological knowledge. Indeed, the results of the ceramic analyses indicate that the local production exhibits a wide technological variability, suggesting nonspecialized manufacture with several coexisting craft traditions.¹¹⁴

Normally, the low level of specialization and the lax control of production imply a low socioeconomic organization and weak hierarchical structures. Was this, in fact, the character of the earlier Aspis community, and if so, for what reason did they import all these “luxury” vessels for which we postulated a prestige function? Is there not a contradiction present here?

Unfortunately, the building remains from this phase of the settlement are too insignificant to give an idea of the architectural layout and thus of the socioeconomic organization. The only data currently available concerns a rather rich ceramic assemblage. Notable among its components is the presence of another imported painted ware, the Lustrous Decorated ware, of Minoan inspiration, for which we have

¹¹¹ LINDBLOM 2001, 35.

¹¹² ZERNER 1993, 49–50.

¹¹³ “As superior alternatives to local ones”: LINDBLOM 2001, 42; see also ZERNER 1993, 55 n. 62.

¹¹⁴ KILIKOGLU *et al.* 2003, 134; PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 37.

¹¹⁵ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2003, 36–7.

also postulated a specific use.¹¹⁵ On the basis of the existence of these two main imported pottery categories (Aeginetan matt-painted and Lustrous Decorated ware), and assuming that they did have the symbolic character we have assigned to them, we would venture to suggest the existence of a kind of local “elite” which tried, through special manifestations and rituals, to exhibit its pretensions and compete with other groups of high social and economic status, on Aegina and perhaps on Crete. In other words, during this early phase, the Aspis community – despite the absence of an advanced social organization – entertained important relations with the external world, through which it attempted to accommodate the great expectations of at least some of its members.¹¹⁶

Aspis phase III–IV (MH IIIA/B–LH IA)

It has been observed that in most MH settlements the number of imported Aeginetan vessels seems to increase through time.¹¹⁷ At Aspis we are faced with the opposite phenomenon – that is, the gradual decrease of Aeginetan pottery, at least of the matt-painted category.¹¹⁸ This phenomenon, since it is not apparently connected with a decrease in Aeginetan production or some problem in the trade network, should indicate a reduction in the demand for Aeginetan matt-painted vessels at Aspis. It is worth noting that the same picture of a decreasing presence through time has been observed in the second category of imported pottery at Aspis, the Lustrous Decorated ware.¹¹⁹ The reason for this voluntary reduction in imports does not seem to be connected with some kind of economic crisis since, after the destruction of the first settlement at Aspis, life not only continued on the hill but instead flourished as the settlement was reorganized, and during its latest phase it acquired a monumental character and

very probably a fortification. The explanation is rather to be sought in some social changes (change in practices, in the use of space, etc.) and/or the development of the local ceramic production, which must have covered, to a large extent, the demand. This local production, although never attaining the quality of the Aeginetan products or prototypes, gradually became particularly creative. In fact, the insistence on the production of some ceramic types of mainland tradition (kantharoi, goblets), in combination with the decline in imports, should indicate that the local society, contrary to others in the region (like that of Mycenae), presents signs of a kind of introversion and a desire to affirm its “Helladic” identity.¹²⁰

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, I would like to highlight a point which seems to me of particular importance: the wide distribution of Aeginetan pottery during the MH period indicates not only the existence of a developed trade network over a large area of the mainland and the islands, but also the existence of a *network of common references*. People who used the Aeginetan vessels (and perhaps also those who could not obtain them) must have been instantly aware not only of their provenance, but also of their function and significance. Therefore, the special manifestations supposed to be connected with this pottery, and whatever they celebrated or symbolized, were known to and acknowledged by a large part of the MH world, constituting a common present and a common “vocabulary”. These common references could not refer to anything but an ideological coherence, a sort of MH “koine”, which apparently was developed from a very early stage of the period, at least from the end of MH I, with the decisive contribution of Aegina.

¹¹⁶ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2003, 40.

¹¹⁷ LINDBLOM 2001, 40–2, with previous bibliography.

¹¹⁸ See n. 3 above.

¹¹⁹ PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2003, 33–4.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 40–1.

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