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COOKING AND UTILITARIAN WARES FROM A WATER CRYPT IN ANCIENT MESSENE

During excavations at ancient Messene (Peloponnese) a pottery assemblage was found dumped within a water crypt that constituted part of the sanctuary of Sarapis and Isis and had been used as a refuse pit after the abandonment of the complex following 365 AD. The assemblage comprises only cooking wares and utilitarian closed forms, together with few auxiliary clay objects. Three main fabrics make up the bulk of the ceramics and can be attributed to the local productions. Numerous examples of four main types of cooking pots have been revealed. Considering the deficiencies observed in the manufacture of most of these vessels and the fact that some of them are over-fired, it is argued that what has been excavated from the water crypt constitutes wasters rejected from a kiln-firing event in this particular area. Based on the evidence, this assemblage should be dated within the 5th century AD.

Water crypt – ancient Messene – ceramics

*To the memory of Professor Petros Themelis***Introduction**

Among the pottery dating from the late Roman period and excavated in various locations around the site of ancient Messene (for a typical case: Yangaki 2014), a characteristic group comes from a fill excavated in an underground vaulted construction located in the sanctuary of Sarapis and Isis (Themelis 2002: 33-34; 2003: 29-33; 2011: 97-109). It has been confirmed that this is located close to the theatre of ancient Messene, being directly to its south (Themelis 2002: 33-34; 2003: 29; 2011: 97, 105-106; 2021: 43-44; 2022: 87-92). Part of a vaulted subterranean construction has been revealed: an underground corridor in the form of the Greek letter Π, one side running parallel to the road outside the south part of the theatre (**fig. 1**) (Themelis 2002: 33; 2011: 105). At the west and the east side of this construction two arched niches have been revealed (Themelis 2011: 105). Given that an underground water crypt is a feature met with in some Isis sanctuaries and taking into consideration the finding of terracotta pipes in the upper parts of the Π-shaped construction at Messene, this last in all likelihood initially functioned as a water reservoir (Themelis 2002: 33; 2011: 105). During the excavation, a specific part of the east section of this feature was found filled with various debris – numerous pottery fragments, roof tiles, bricks, stones and architectural members of limestone, sandstone and marble. Thus, it seems that after the destruction of the Messene sanctuary, attributed by P. Themelis to the destructive earthquake of 365 AD, and the collapse of the vaulting of its roof, this water reservoir was used as a refuse pit (Themelis 2002: 34; 2011: 105, 109).

The pottery assemblage*The assemblage*

The pottery assemblage from the aforementioned section comprises only cooking wares and utilitarian closed wares, such as jugs and basins (**fig. 2**), together with auxiliary clay objects, such as stoppers or biconical support-rings (**fig. 4, a-b, e-f**). No imported, fine red-slipped tablewares have been found and no open forms, decorated or not, such as dishes or bowls. Otherwise, only part of a lamp and a clay lamp mold have been recovered from a layer to the west of this fill, which possibly constitutes part of the same deposition. The majority of the material is manufactured from one of the following three fabric groups, as revealed by systematic study, and thus is considered as local produce.

Fabrics

Three common fabric groups have been distinguished macroscopically according to the quantity of the specimens (for the basic lines of the description of fabrics, see Yangaki 2005: 34-35):

- Fabric 1 (**fig. 3, a**): medium, reddish-yellow (5YR 5/8 yellowish-red–2.5YR 5/8 red), common, small-medium, rounded-tabular, red inclusions; few-frequent, medium-large, rounded-tabular, white inclusions; few, small, rounded-tabular, reddish-black to black inclusions; frequent mica.

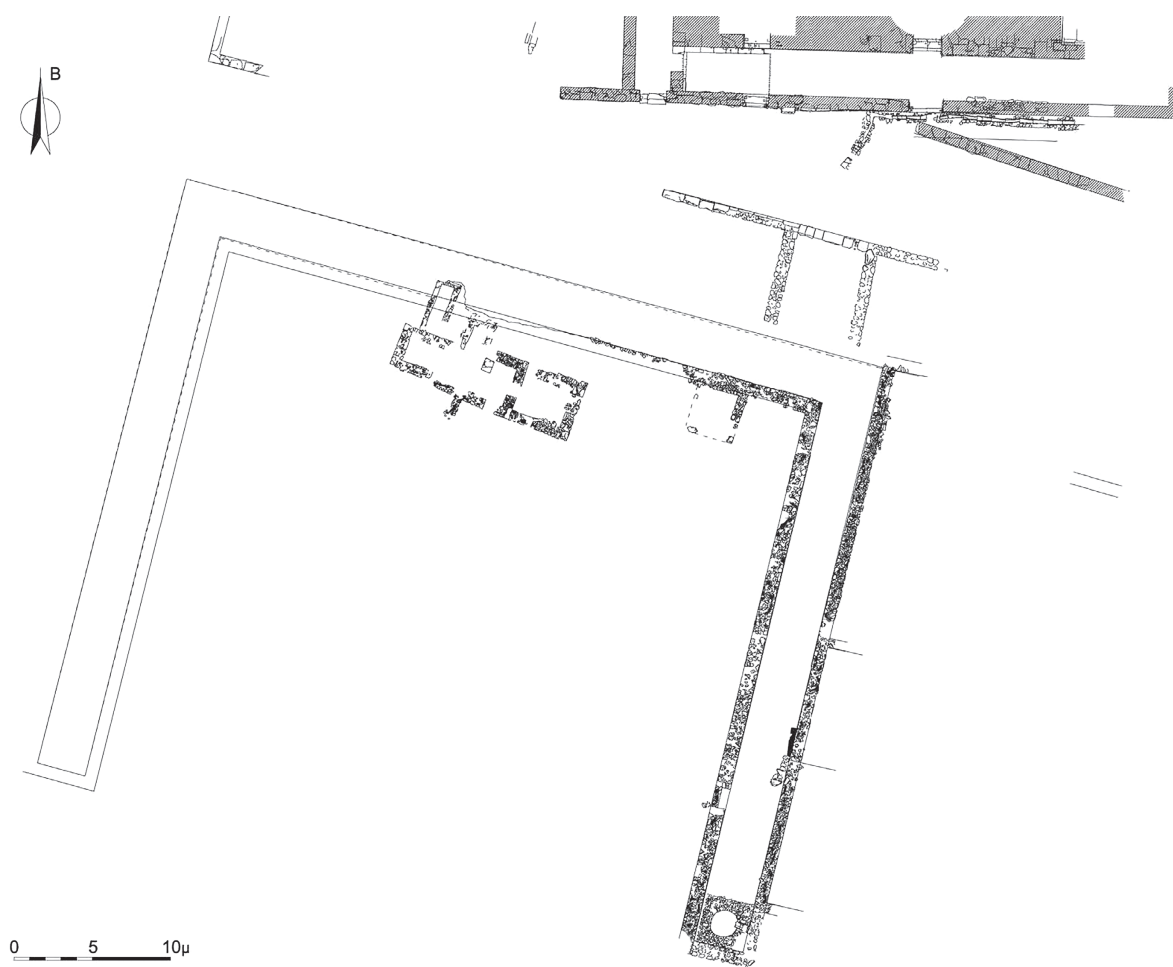


Fig. 1. Plan of the water crypt (after Themelis 2011: 105, fig. 14).

- Fabric 2 (fig. 3, b): coarse, red (2.5 YR 5/8–6/8 red); common, small, rounded, red inclusions; common, medium-large, sub-rounded-tabular, quartz; frequent, medium, rounded-tabular, white inclusions; few, small-medium, rounded-tabular, blackish inclusions; rare mica.

- Fabric 3 (fig. 3, c): coarse, grayish black (2.5YR 4/1 dark reddish clay - 7.5YR 4/2 brown); few, small, rounded, red inclusions; common, large, sub-rounded, tabular, quartz; few, small, rounded, white inclusions; frequent, medium-large pores.

These fabric groups are the same, macroscopically, as those identified in the material found during the excavation of funerary monument 18, located immediately outside the Arcadian Gate (on this material: Yangaki 2014: 769-776). The first fabric characterizes the rare examples of utilitarian wares and lamps. Fabric 2 is typical of different forms of cooking pots, as is also Fabric 3, although Fabric 2 is more common than Fabric 3. For the material from the Arcadian Gate it has been remarked that – since various forms of pottery are made of Fabric 1, and Fabric 2 is typically used in various types of cooking ware – these two fabrics correspond to the local products of the region during the late Roman period (Yangaki 2014: 770). The plentiful evidence found within this water crypt further enhances this view, particularly since all the related evidence dates from the late Roman period.

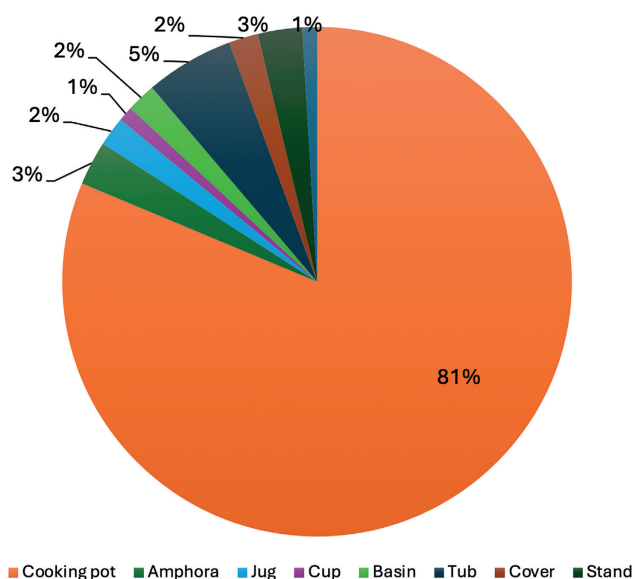


Fig. 2. Percentage of the main categories of pottery from the assemblage (chart by the author).

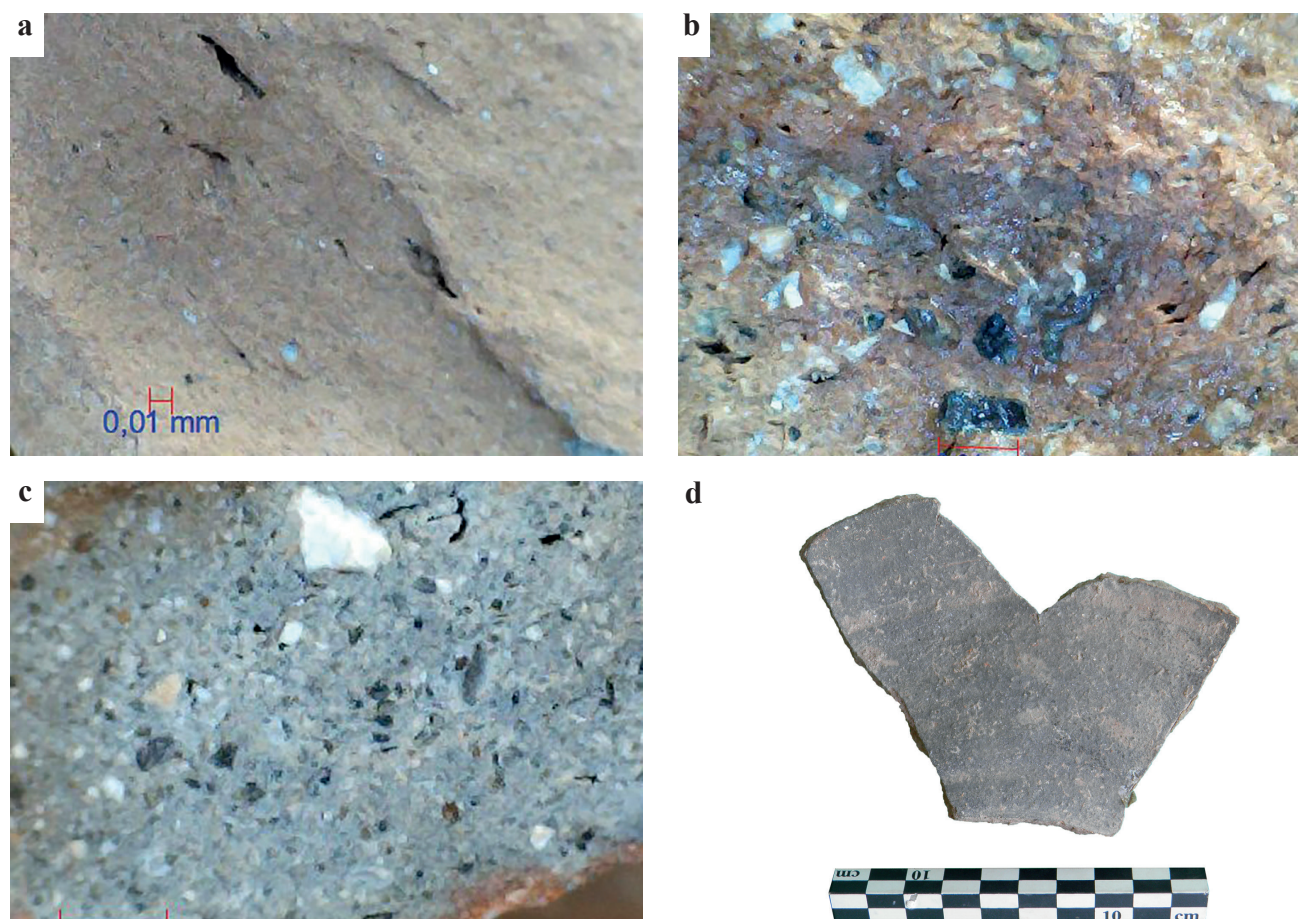


Fig. 3. Macroscopic views of fabrics. a. Fabric 1; b. Fabric 2; c. Fabric 3; d. Overfired fragment found among the pottery from the water crypt (photos: A. G. Yangaki).

Amphorae

The few fragments (**fig. 4, c-d, fig. 5**) from the assemblage correspond to a regional form of amphora which has similarities to the so-called Agora M235/M327 (Robinson 1959: 106, M235, pl. 28, M235, 115, M327, pl. 32, M327; Opař 2014: 43-47). The neck is high, ending in a thickened rim which is concave on the interior, and the slightly conical toe is rounded at the bottom, having no striations. The rim example from the assemblage differs from the main examples of this form in that the handle attachment is placed rather high, below the rim. It is characterized by uneven firing. Fabric 1 characterizes these rim and bottom fragments, thus implying their local provenance. In fact, these rare examples belong to the group of amphorae of similar form dating from the 5th century AD, found in the contexts of the Arcadian Gate (Yangaki 2014: 771, 776, fig. 5, a-c), and showing that this regional form was quite common on the site. Concerning the general evolution of amphora Agora M235/M327, as presented by A. Opař, and even although no complete vessel was derived from this assemblage, yet based on the proportions and the forms of the toes, the latter show more similarities to the subtypes of the 4th century AD (Opař 2014: 44, fig. 1, 45, figs. 6-7). As for the form of the toe (**fig. 4, c-d**), besides the examples from the Agora of Athens (Robinson

1959: 106, M235, 115, M327), similar forms are attested in another assemblage from Athens (Kouzel 2014: 750, 757, fig. 8), at Argos (Abadie-Reynal 1989: 49-50 fig. 4; Oikonomou-Laniado 2003: 36 no. 5, 140, fig. 63; Abadie-Reynal 2007: 245, no. 444, pl. 70, no. 444.1), Voies (Zavvou and Maltezou 2010: 773, no. 21, 780, fig. 14), to state some of the respective similar examples. Concerning the form of the preserved rim (**fig. 5**) from the water crypt, it finds more similarities with the form of the 5th century AD (Opař 2014: 46, fig. 8). This emerging chronological framework is also consistent with the general date of the assemblage (see below), suggesting that this form was already circulating in ancient Messene in the course of the late 4th century AD and during the early 5th century AD. This would be before its more common presence in the course of the more advanced 5th century AD, as suggested by the published evidence from the Arcadian Gate (Yangaki 2014: 771, 776, fig. 5, a-c).

Jug

Of the three examples of jugs identified within the group (fabric 1, **fig. 3, a**), that which was restored to its full height (**fig. 6, a-b**) finds exact parallels in one from the Athenian Agora dating from the 4th century AD (Robinson 1959: 105,

M227, pl. 27, M227) and from Argos of the 5th century AD (Ivantchik 2002: 397, fig. 28, 170, 398, fig. 29, 170). It shares general correlations in the formation of the base, the body and the high large neck with examples from Eleutherna from the context of 365 AD (Yangaki 2005: 51, no. 80, pl. VII, 8, 54, no. 119, pl. X, 6). The rim is flat with a triangular edge, the

neck is large, the ridged oval body ends in a ring-base. The body is not symmetrical with respect to its vertical axis as its two sides are slightly compressed and half of the pot bears intense traces of fire. The second example (fig. 7), from the lower part of a jug's ring-base (fabric 2, fig. 3, b), constitutes a firing failure since the whole shape is completely distorted.

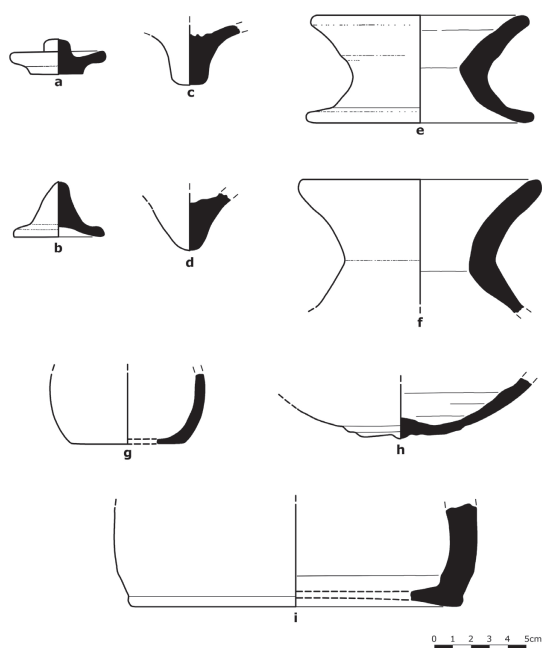


Fig. 4. a-b: Stoppers (Απο027, Απο028); c-d: amphora toes (Απο060, Απο004); e-f: biconical support-rings (13252, Απο034); g: cup (Απο062); h: cooking pot (Απο006); i: large bowl (Απο061) (drawings: A. G. Yangaki).



Fig. 5. Rim fragments of amphora related to the so-called Agora M235 type (Απο029) (photo: A. G. Yangaki).

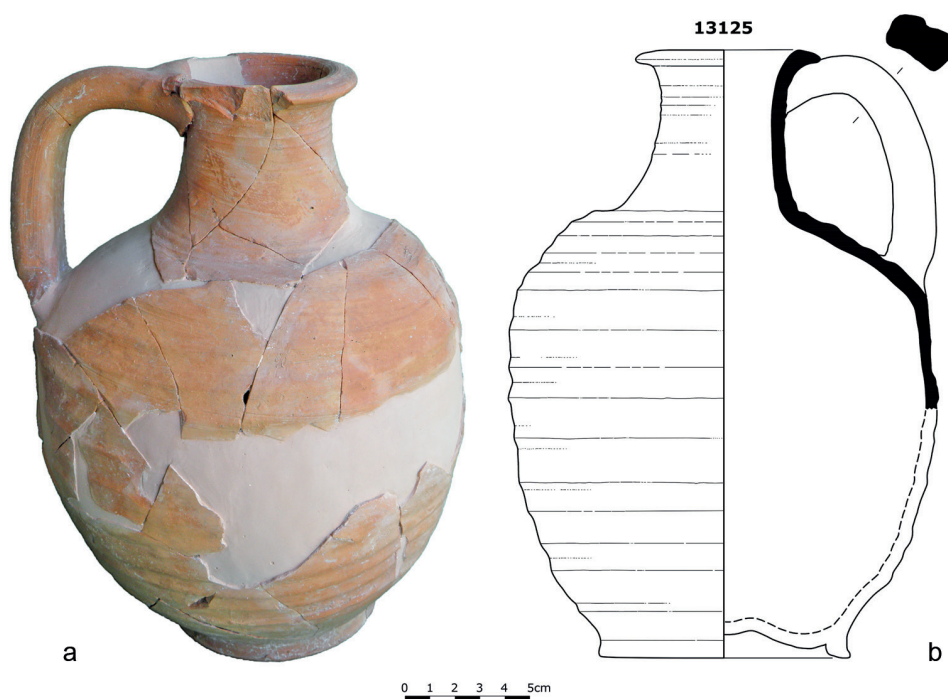


Fig. 6. Photo and drawing of a jug (13125) (photo-drawing: A. G. Yangaki).

Basins and Tubs

The small number of basins and tubs share horizontal, flattened rims or everted and thickened rims, straight bodies and flat bases (fig. 8a-b and fig. 9). They are mainly made from fabric 1 (fig. 3, a). They find parallels with vessels dated in the period from the 3rd up to the 5th/early 6th century AD, as characteristic examples from Athens, Argos, Demetrias, Delphi, Knossos, Eleutherna, Empoli, Carthage and Baalbek show (Robinson 1959: 66, nos. K78-K79, pl. 13, K78-K79; Ivantchik 2002: 403, fig. 32, 183; Eiwanger 1981: 65-66; Ware IIIK, pl. 57, IIIa.107; Pétridis 2010: 55-56, no. CS 18, no. CS21, 202, pl. 14, fig. 42, no. CS 18, 203, fig. 45, no. CS 21; Hayes 1983: 133, fig. 14, 173; Yangaki 2005: 53, no. 112, pl. X, 2, 57, no. 139, pl. XII, 3; Cantini, Boschian and Gabriele

2014: 204, 210, fig. 3 AD.1 1-3; Tomber 1988: 476; Hamel 2010: 878, 884, fig. 30, respectively). Incised decoration either ornaments the upper part of the rim (basins) or the exterior of the body (tubs). In the case of the restored and almost complete tub, the original two horizontal handles seem to have been detached at some point, leaving traces on the body and suggesting a less than perfect manufacturing process.



Fig. 7. Lower part of a jug that constitutes a firing failure (13249) (photo: A. G. Yangaki).

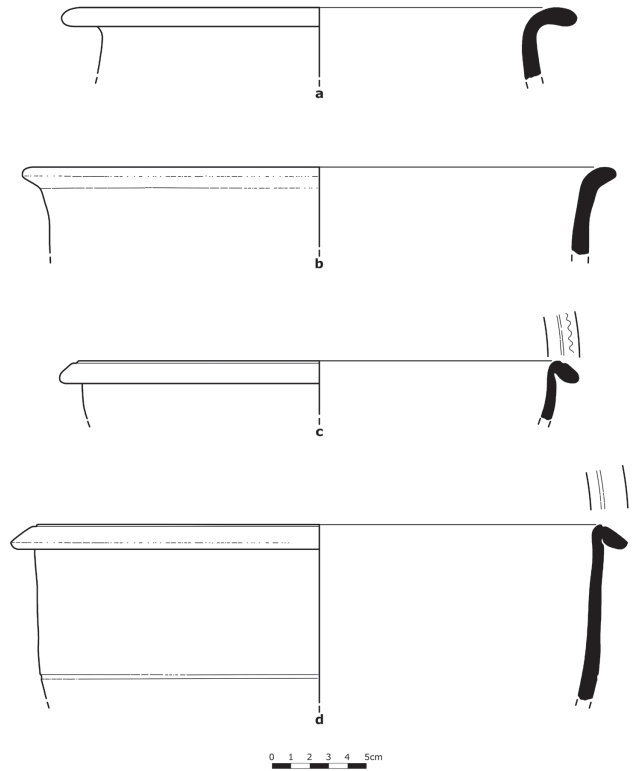


Fig. 9. Various rim forms of basins (Απο022, Απο024, Απο023, Απο025) (drawing: A. G. Yangaki).

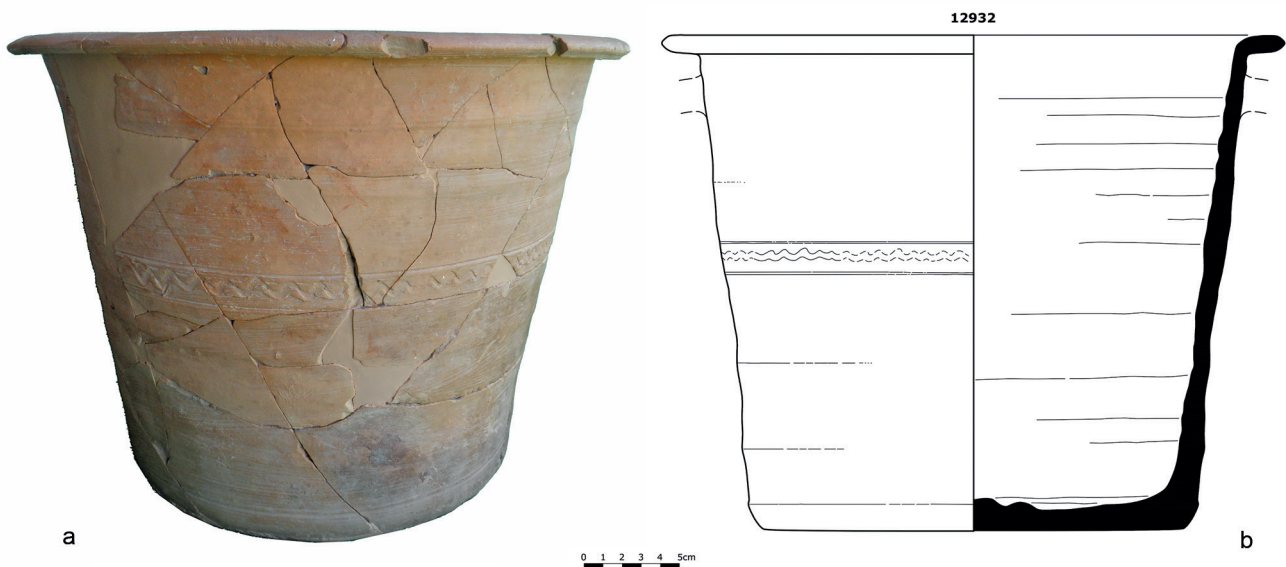


Fig. 8. Photo and drawing of a restored basin (12932) (photo-drawing: A. G. Yangaki).

Cooking pots

Four main types of cooking wares are distinguished. Type I: Everted flattened rim with two angular edges and a deep groove or incision on the outer side of the rim (fig. 10, a-b, 11 and 12, d). In some cases, two parallel incisions run around

the upper surface of the rim. This is by far the commonest form, made from fabric 2 (fig. 3, b). As to the general formation of the rim and the body, it finds similarities with cooking pots from Argos, from Demetrias and from Knidos, of the 5th century AD (Ivantchik 2002: 400, fig. 30, 177, 402; Eiwan-ger 1981: 46-47, Ware IIE, Form XI, pl. 24, II.411-II.416;



Fig. 10. Photo and drawing of an example of cooking pot, type I (13112) (photo-drawing: A. G. Yangaki).

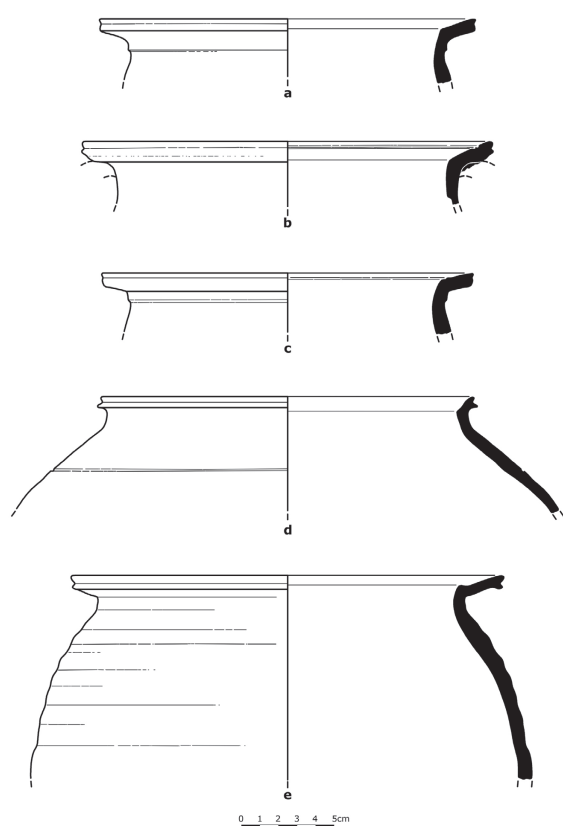


Fig. 11. Various sub-forms of cooking pot, type I (Απο072, Απο077, Απο073, Απο081, Απο036) (drawings: A. G. Yangaki).

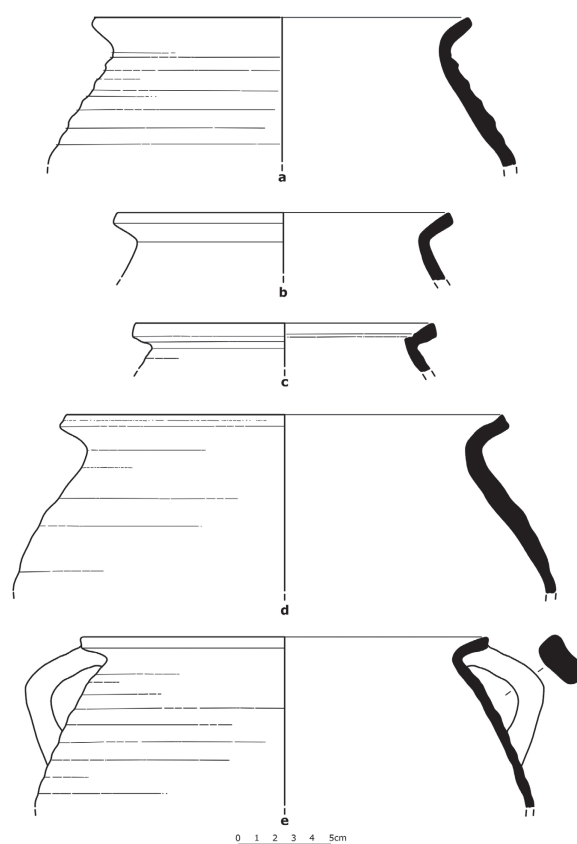


Fig. 12. a-c, e: Various sub-forms of cooking pot, type II (Απο067, Απο064, Απο065, Απο038); d: cooking pot, type I (Απο045) (drawings: A. G. Yangaki).

Doksanalti and Tekocak 2014: 283, Cooking Pot I, 286, fig. 4, 21, respectively). Type II: Flattened rim with a rounded edge and globular body (fig. 12, a-c, e); examples are made mostly from fabric 2 (fig. 3, b). Often on the upper surface of the rim there runs an incision. This form is common in contexts of the final quarter of the 4th c. and the 5th century AD in several locations such as in Argos, Sparta, Eleutherna, Knossos, Knidos, Philippi and Stobi (Ivantchik 2002: 400, fig. 30, 178, 401, fig. 31, 178, 402; Pickersgill and Roberts 2003: 578, fig. 17, 126; Yangaki 2005, 168, 426, fig. 37, g, h; Hayes 1983: 126, fig. 8, 97; Doksanalti and Tekocak 2014: 282, Cooking Pot G, 285, fig. 3, 19; Zachariadis 2020: I. 417, CLW33, II. fig. 136, nos. 1690-1691; Anderson-Stojanović 1992: 137, no. 1194, pl. 138, 1194, respectively), while some examples are related to the so-called “Aegean Cooking Wares” (on this category: Hayes 1983: 105 type 2, 122, nos. 58-61, 63-64; Waksman and Lemaître 2010). Type III: High, in-turned rim, with a thick edge, in some cases squared, in others rounded (fig. 13, a-b and 14, a-f). Fabrics 2 and 3 correspond to this form (fig. 3, b-c). In some cases, a deep seating cavity is created inside the rim (for receiving a cover). Externally, it usually preserves on the outer surface of the rim one large incision, while often there may be two. Its rim form has close similarities with a type of cooking pot from Novae (Bulgaria), there located in layers of the 6th century AD (Biernacki and Klenina 2014: 152, 156, fig. 3, 1). Type IVa: High, slightly everted, simple rim with rounded edge, quite thick (fig. 15, a-b and 16, a, c-d). Inside below the edge of the rim often runs an incision. Type IVb: High, straight rim with a rounded edge, slightly concave on the interior (fig. 16, b, e). The handles of type IV are vertical, attached to the rim, elliptical in cross-section with a central, wide groove along their backs. Fabric 2 characterizes most of the examples, although some occur in fabric 3. Examples of type IVa have great similarities in their upper part with a form of cooking ware from Eleutherna found within the contexts of 365 AD (Yangaki 2005: 427, fig. 38, a), in an early 5th century AD context from S. Giacomo degli Schiavoni in Italy (Albarella,

Ceglia and Roberts 1993: 192, fig. 16, 118-119), in a context of the second half of the 5th century AD from Durrës in Albania (Shkodra-Rrugia 2010: 721-722, 727, fig. 5, 19-20), in Philippi dated to the 6th century AD onwards (Zachariadis 2020: I. 423-425, CLW36, II. fig. 150, no. 1801) and from Knidos from a context dated to the early 6th century AD

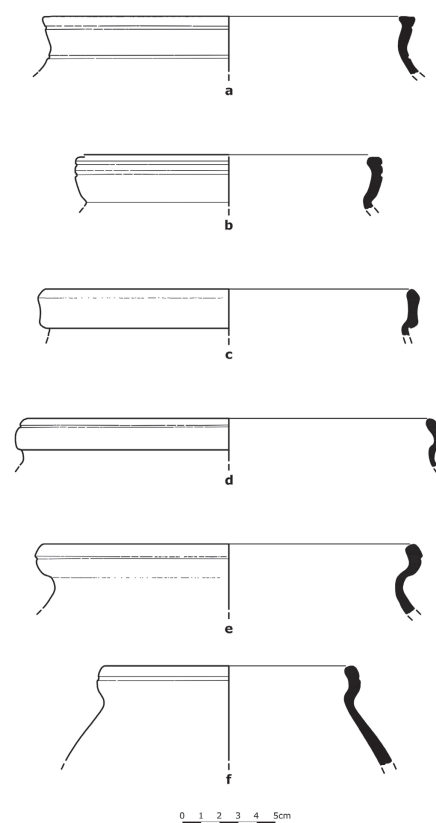


Fig. 14. Various sub-forms of cooking pot, type III (Απο093, Απο087, Απο090, Απο094, Απο021, Απο084) (drawings: A. G. Yangaki).

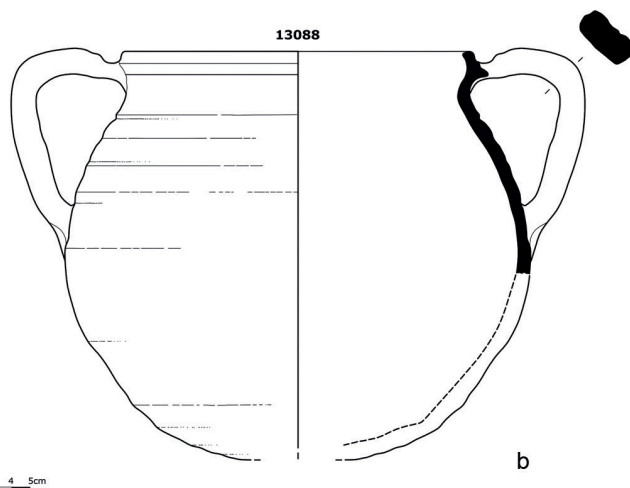


Fig. 13. Photo and drawing of an example of cooking pot, type III (13088) (photo-drawing: A. G. Yangaki).

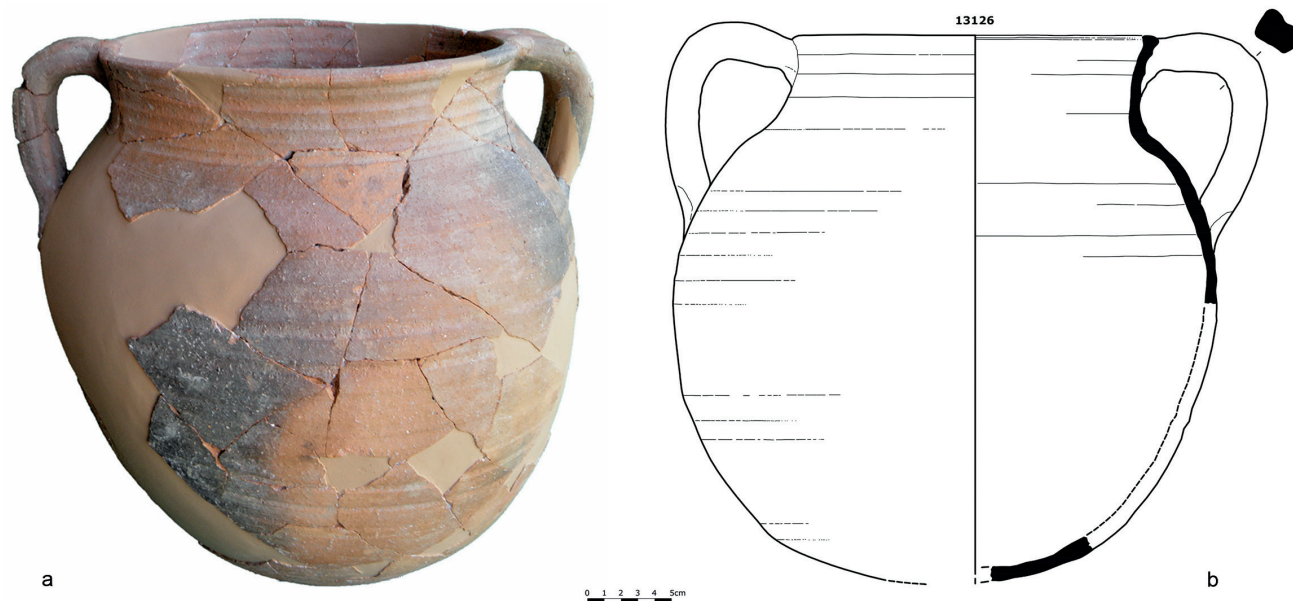


Fig. 15. Photo and drawing of an example of cooking pot, type IVa (13126) (photo-drawing: A. G. Yangaki).

(Doksanaltı 2010: 770, 775, fig. 1, 1-2; Doksanaltı and Tekocak 2014: 282, Cooking Pot E, 285, fig. 3, 17). In all the four main types, the body is globular with a rounded base (**fig. 4, h**); the vertical handles are attached to the rim and elliptical in cross-section, bearing a central groove. Types I and II (**figs. 10-12**) show close morphological analogies. Given that type II – which by its form is mostly characteristic of the late 3rd and the first half of the 4th century – occurs rarely compared to type I, which is common during the 5th century – as shown from the assemblages of Argos, Demetrias and Knidos (see above) – it may be suggested that type I constitutes a development of the main form from the 4th into the 5th century AD. Type II consists of small and medium-sized pots. Type III is one of the most common and consists mainly of large-sized vessels, together with type IV.

Lamp mold

From a layer immediately to the west of this assemblage a clay lamp mold (**fig. 17**) was found. From it the upper half of the lamp was produced. Based on the form of the lamp and its decoration, it belongs to the “vine-and-rays” series of Corinthian and Attic lamps, and more specifically to Broneer type 27 lamps (Broneer 1930: 104-105, 189, pl. XX, 570), largely produced during the 2nd and the 3rd century AD. Copies continue to be made in Corinth even during the 5th and the early 6th century AD (Garnett 1975: 186, fig. 2, 190, no. 6, pl. 43, no. 6) and in Athens up into the 5th century AD (Perlzweig 1961: 21, 32, 57; Karivieri 1996: 69, 109-110, 209, no. 163, 211, no. 171, pl. 15, 163, pl. 16, 171, pl. 53, 3). Here, the circular disk bears – starting from the middle – two rings, rays, and then two more framing rings, while the rim portion has a vine pattern consisting of six bunches and four leaves, with spiraling tendrils in between. The handle is grooved and the nozzle is kite-shaped. This particular combination

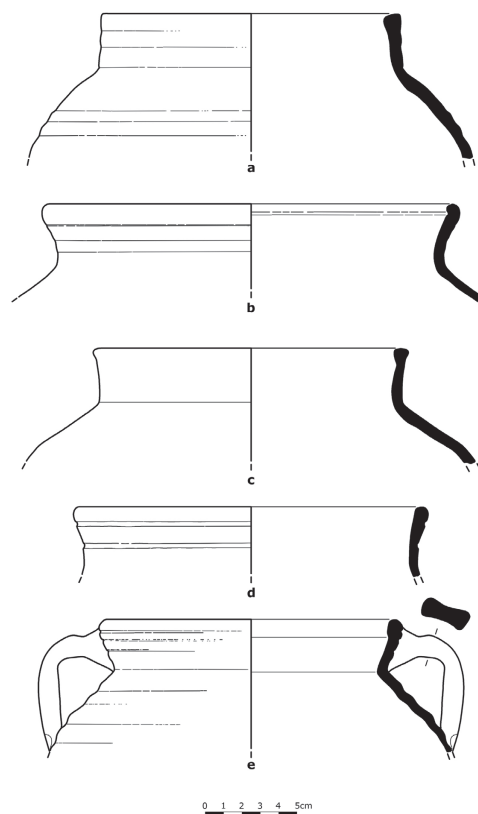


Fig. 16. a., c.-d.: Sub-forms of cooking pot, type IVa (Απο069, Απο066, Απο017); b., e.: Sub-forms of cooking pot, type IVb (Απο070, Απο042) (drawings: A. G. Yangaki).

of decorative motifs finds exact parallels with a lamp from the Athenian Agora dated to the first half of the 3rd century AD (Perlzweig 1961: 145, no. 1506, pl. 28, 1506) and from the Kerameikos (Perlzweig 1961: 94, no. 272, pl. 8, 272; see

also: Karivieri 1996: 209, no. 163). The general shape and decoration of the group carried on into the early 4th century AD (for various similar but not quite identical examples: Perlzweig 1961: 146, no. 1515, no. 1552, 146, no. 1516, no. 1540, no. 1546, pl. 28, 1516, 1540, 1544, 1552; Karivieri 1996: 209, no. 163, 211, no. 171, pl. 15, 163, pl. 16, 171) and the mold recalls such examples of the early 4th century AD. Similar lamps occur in the Agora of Thessaloniki, dated mostly in the middle of the 3rd century AD (Adam-Veleni 2010: 189, 196, nos. 29-30, 204, figs. 3, 4, 6). Though the lamp mold gives an enhanced relief, yet a copy produced from it makes it plain that the motifs are not actually very cleanly detailed. From this it can be concluded that the mold was made from a ‘prototype’, itself manufactured from a rather degraded mold. This observation – taking into consideration the date ascribed to the main assemblage from ancient Messene (see below) – together with the fact that this local counterpart is more elongated and has a rather condensed disk (in comparison to the earlier originals) demonstrates the rather long period separating the local manufacture of these lamps from their closest original parallels. These last in fact are considerably earlier, although “vine-and-rays” lamps did continue to be produced for a long time. One might recall here that even within the century-long Attic lamp sequence the later products often differed notably from their earlier counterparts (Perlzweig 1961: 21).

Various clay objects

Besides the above, the support-rings (**fig. 4, e-f**) bear general analogies with others from Boeotia and Eleutherna, dated to the 4th century AD (Gerousi 2014: 195, 202, fig. 9; Yangaki 2005: 244, no. 64, 452, fig. 63, k, respectively), but also with support-rings from Delphi, dated to the last quarter of the 6th century AD (Pétridis 2010, 54, no. CS 15, 202, pl. 14, fig. 40, no. CS 15). Other clay objects find close analogies in form with similar ones dating to the 4th and the 5th centuries AD from other areas. For example the small stoppers (**fig. 4, a-b**) have analogies with stoppers from Delphi (Pétridis 2010: 117, nos. D 16, D 18, 226, pl. 38, fig. 202, no. D 16, fig. 203, no. D 18) or from Argos (Ivantchik 2002: 402, 403, fig. 32, 187-188, 404), respectively; the shallow bowl with thickened body is very similar to a bowl (**fig. 4, i**) from S. Giacomo degli Schiavoni (Albarella and Ceglie and Roberts 1993: 196, fig. 18, 146, 198, no. 146).

Remarks on the pottery assemblage

On the manufacture

The detailed examination of the vessels has shown that several of them have a body form which is not curved but is ellipsoidal in shape (**fig. 7**). In several cases the handles have become completely detached (**fig. 18**), without taking anything of the body with them. It seems that the various parts of these vessels have not been well fixed together, possibly due to the fact that they have not dried out uniformly. Thus



Fig. 17. Complete lamp mold (12729) (photo: A. G. Yangaki).



Fig. 18. Detached handles from cooking pots, preserving marks of their points of original attachment to the vessels (photo: A. G. Yangaki).

after the completion of their firing, most of the handles came off the main body. In other cases, the vessel does not have a symmetrical form, e.g. one side of the rim is higher than the other. One jug has completely lost its shape (**fig. 7**), surely thereby becoming a reject from the pottery-making process; other vessels are overfired (**fig. 3, d**). Based on all these remarks and the fact that specific forms are found repeatedly within the same assemblage and that all bear the same kind of failures, it can reasonably be proposed that what has been excavated from the water crypt constitutes firing wasters rejected from a kiln-firing event in this particular area. Based on this interpretation and the common groups of fabrics employed for the various forms of cooking wares, one can observe that at least four different forms of cooking wares, all of a generally diffused globular type with a rounded base, were being produced within the same workshop and during

the same timeframe. The lamp mold (**fig. 17**) offers evidence on the contemporaneous production of lamps of a common Roman type, showing that at the site of late Roman Messene lamps were also manufactured locally.

On the date

Taking into consideration the four types of cooking pots, which constitute by far the most common finds from the assemblage, and based on the similarities of each type with cooking pots from other areas and noting the latter's dating, one may observe that Messene's cooking pots types (**figs. 10-16**) either bear characteristics found in other cooking pots of the 4th, or of the 5th or even of the early 6th century AD. So they seem to be on the threshold of transitional phase.

At the site of the Agora of Argos an assemblage of pottery dated to the 5th century AD (with two main phases) contained examples of cooking pots similar in rim form with types I and II (Ivantchik 2002: 331, 400, **fig. 30**, 178, 180, 402). Further at the site of S. Giacomo degli Schiavoni in Italy, a context dated to 420-430 AD contained not only cooking pots similar in form with the water crypt's type II but also with its type IV as well (Albarella, Ceglia and Roberts 1993: 181, **fig. 11**, 61, b, d, 192, **fig. 16**, 118-119). On the other hand, a group of pottery from Durrës (Albania) dating to the 4th to 5th century AD comprises cooking pots similar in form to those of our type II, while another group dating to the second half of the 5th century and later contains cooking pots similar to those of our type IV (Shkodra-Rrugia 2010: 721-722, 726, **fig. 3**, 5, 727, **fig. 5**, 20, respectively). In Knidos, the local production comprises cooking pots similar to the assemblage's types I and II and there dated to the early 5th century AD, while a form related to type IV is there dated to the early 6th century AD (Doksanaltı and Tekocak 2014: 282-283, Cooking Pots G, I and E, respectively, 285-286, **fig. 3**, 19, **fig. 4**, 21 and **fig. 3**, 17, respectively). A similar rim form to type III is found in Novae and dated to the 6th century there (Biernacki and Klenina 2014: 152, 156, **fig. 3**, 1), but the type III's examples from Messene seem to have a different ratio between their rim diameters and the maximum diameter of the body, which could possibly constitute a manufacturing but also a chronological differentiation. More precisely, the Messene examples have larger opening than that of the cooking pots from Novae, indeed not differing by much from the vessel's maximum body diameter. In all the comparable contexts (Argos, S. Giacomo degli Schiavoni, Durrës, Knidos), more than one type of cooking pot are found within the same context, mostly dating to the 5th century AD, with some similar in form to those from Messene, and with some or all of the examples being attributed to local production at each site. Although type III has similarities with a form from Novae there dated to the 6th century AD, such a date cannot be ascribed to the Messene's assemblage. This is not only due to the far more numerous material of the other forms of cooking pots (particularly the common Type II, encountered within the early 5th century AD), or of the amphorae (**fig. 4, c-d** and **5**), the jugs (**figs. 6-7**) and the lamp mold (**fig. 17**), which points to an earlier

date, mainly within the 5th century AD, but also by simple observation of individual features of some of the vessels. Thus, the two jugs bear characteristic ring-bases, hollow in the centre (**fig. 6 b**, **fig. 7**), recalling those of the earlier 3rd and 4th century AD examples (see above), and are not of the simple, flat-based types of later layers, such as those in Novae, for example (Biernacki and Klenina 2014: 155, **fig. 2**, 9-10), but also seen elsewhere. Also, the sherds of the main type of amphora bear characteristics of the sub-types of the late 4th century and of the 5th century AD (see above). Even the lamp mold speaks in favor of an earlier date, as previously observed, during the 4th century AD, although an early 5th century use could perhaps just be envisaged. Furthermore, the archaeological data do not offer evidence that this fill was constituted in different but closely successive acts of rejection; on the contrary, all the previously mentioned vessels were found within the same fill, thus one concludes that it constitutes a single event. This opinion is further enhanced by the observation that numerous rejected handles of cooking pots have the same general form but seem to have been used indiscriminately on all four types of cooking pots described above. Based on all the previous remarks, it seems logical to suggest that the material from ancient Messene offers us a glimpse into a single act of refuse deposition. All in all, the circumstances suggest that the aforementioned various forms of wares were in production around the beginning of the 5th century AD, after which period they were thrown into this fill. They form an interesting context that represents, in my opinion, the transition from earlier forms (types I and II of the cooking pots) to others (types III and IV of the cooking pots), which will become more common within the advanced 5th or even the 6th century AD, as is suggested by the latter's date in other areas. It advocates the latter's early beginning of production, at least in areas such as ancient Messene.

Concluding remarks

The act of discarding the whole material took place after 365 AD, when the water crypt had been destroyed and could only be used as a refuse dumping place. The assemblage of pottery seems to be consistent in its date (see below) and, given the typology of the forms, can be placed after the late 4th century, during the first decades of the 5th century AD period. The deposition was made possibly around the first decades of the 5th century AD. Within the same fill also occurred other objects of varied dates, such as architectural members of the late Hellenistic-early Roman period (Themelis 2011: 106). Based on the fact that the majority of the vessels bears traces of failure in manufacture, as described previously, and that specific groups of fabrics characterize either the cooking or the utilitarian wares, it can be reasonably argued that these objects provide evidence of the local production in the area of the 5th century AD. Thus, they offer additional testimony to the proposed existence of local workshops deduced from the material published from the area of the Arcadian Gate (Yangaki 2014: 769-772). The material here seems to represent a failed firing, producing wasters which were discarded all at one and the same time. The location of their

disposal may argue that the original workshop was located nearby. Given the forms and the date, this pottery group in fact may be considered as an intermediary link between the two groups identified in the pottery material of the Arcadian Gate: “group 1” dating to the late 3rd-first half of the 4th century AD and “group 2” dating after the early 5th century AD (Yangaki 2014: 769-772). If so, the present assemblage thus covers the period from the latter part of the 4th century, that of the early 5th century AD. This seems probable since “group 2” contains examples of cooking wares of types II and III presented here (Yangaki 2014: 770-771, 775, fig. 4, c-d). Thus, the pottery material from the water crypt supplies a missing link in the “stratigraphy” of ceramic circulation and production at the site in the late Roman period, offering evidence on the 5th century AD.

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