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DUMP 1004 OF THE SOUTHERN BUILDING IN THE BYZANTINE HOUSES QUARTER (GORTYN, CRETE). ECHOES OF LOCAL PRODUCTION AND REGIONAL NETWORKS IN GORTYN BETWEEN THE 4TH AND THE 8TH CENTURY AD

This paper provides an overview of the coarse wares from the excavation of the Southern Building of the Byzantine Houses Quarter (Archaeological Mission of the University of Macerata – Excavations of the Italian Archaeological School at Athens). It focuses on the finds from SU 1004, interpreted as an 8th century dump. Some considerations will be made primarily on recurrent pottery types, providing the possibility of examining the early Byzantine and Byzantine production of Gortyn more in-depth. The paper, throughout, highlights connections with regional and Mediterranean networks, especially the Eastern ones.

Gortyn – Late Roman coarse wares – Byzantine pottery – Plain-ware pottery – cooking ware pottery

Coarse wares from the Southern Building of the Byzantine Houses Quarter of Gortyn. The progress of the study

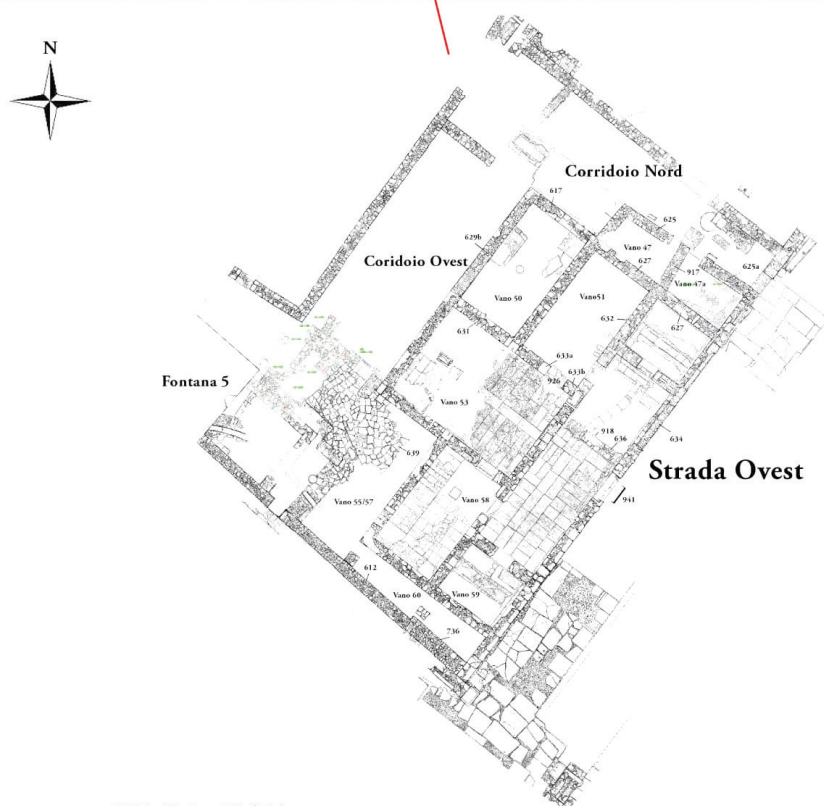
The study of the plain and cooking ware pottery from the Southern Building of the Byzantine Houses Quarter of Gortyn is still in progress and concerns the ceramic material found during the excavations carried out by the University of Macerata¹ from 2007 to 2017. This research follows the important work already completed and published on pottery production and imports of Gortyn. These singularly advantageous circumstances provide a solid basis for the progression of the study (for previous extensive studies on the ceramic wares of Gortyn, primarily plain and cooking wares, see the contributions in: Bonetto, Francisci and Mazzocchin 2019; Di Vita 1998; Di Vita and Martin 1997; Di Vita 2000. For further considerations, especially on Byzantine pottery, see: Albertocchi 2009; 2014; Perna 2010). A total number of 25011 potsherds in this study belong to plain and cooking ware pottery. Of these, 21109 fragments can be identified as plain ware and 3902 as cooking ware. It is clear from these numbers that cooking ware represents a significantly smaller number of potsherds, a little more than 15% of the total, in the context of the Byzantine Houses Quarter. This disproportion can lead, with the development of the study, to important reflections on the dietary habits of the people of Gortyn during the Byzantine period and also provide information about

the functional purpose of this sector of the city. Of course, in order to make such reflections, it is necessary not only to complete the study of all the material of the excavated context but also to proceed to further comparisons with the nearby context excavated by the University of Siena as well as other chronologically comparable sites both on the island of Crete and in the main centres of the Mediterranean. Unfortunately, to date, and with few remarkable exceptions, coarse wares are often published without complete catalogues. Therefore, it is not always possible to compare contexts. With regards to Gortyn, the disparity between plain and cooking wares can already be observed in the material published in the *Gortina* series. Data clearly show this disparity in the material from the excavation of the *Praetorium* (See: Albertocchi and Perna 2000; Martin 1997a; Martin 1997b; Sirano 2000).

So far, the study of the plain and cooking wares from 2007, 2008, and 2012 has been completed, while the examination of the finds from the 2014 excavations is nearing completion (the years of excavation are 2007, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017). Moreover, due primarily to the crucial work carried out until recently by Marina Albertocchi and Roberto Perna on the fabric groups of plain wares, the study of this class has gone further than the study carried out on cooking wares.

These premises clearly show the preliminary nature of this contribution, especially with regard to conclusions and possible new results. Nevertheless, the significant amount of pottery already catalogued raises relevant questions and establishes methodological approaches. Moreover, this is an opportunity to highlight data that enriches the study of pottery production in the eastern Mediterranean as well as long and regional scale networks.

¹ I take this opportunity to thank professor Perna, who directs the archaeological mission of the University of Macerata, for entrusting me to carry on his work on Gortyn's plain ware pottery to which has been added the study of the cooking wares. The methodological approach, the guidance and the continuous conversations on Gortyn and its ceramic production have been essential to start this ongoing research.



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Fig. 1. Above: Gortyn with the indication of the Byzantine Houses Quarter (in red); Below: Southern Building of the Byzantine Houses Quarter (courtesy of Professor Roberto Perna).

The context. The dump – SU 1004

Given the limited scope of this paper and the evolution of the research, it seemed worthwhile here to propose an overview of the coarse ware found in the SU 1004 of the Southern Building of the Byzantine Houses Quarter (**fig. 1**), which has been interpreted as a dump subsequent to AD 720. The 8th century saw the progressive ruralisation of the area and the contemporary building of fortifications on the acropolis of Gortyn. In this context, after a series of collapses, the Southern Building was reorganised and divided into what has been interpreted as multiple housing units. The eastern part of the building appears to have experienced continuity, and the northern corridor must still have been used as a partially open service area. At a later time, the corridor was used to dump thick layers of ashes, pottery, glass, and bones, probably related to the activities carried out in the adjacent units (Perna 2017: 126-130). SU 1004 has been, therefore, identified as a dump, as already stated. Its excavation brought to light a large number of potsherds. Of the 2166 ceramic sherds (including tiles) and 212 glass fragments, 1205 sherds belong to plain ware and 274 to cooking ware, confirming the significant disparity between the two classes. The large number of sherds made it possible to distinguish and join the fragments of many vessels. Most types have been determined so far by the examination of rim fragments alone (Albertocchi and Perna 2000: 411-414). Therefore, the possibility to join multiple fragments of the same pot, where possible, can be crucial to providing further details regarding shapes, especially when these shapes are frequently recurrent. Within the context of this paper, it is essential to note that it was possible to recognise and classify 86 plain-ware rim fragments or profiles, while this classification was possible for only 26 cooking-ware sherds.

The dump contained numerous pieces of African Red Slip Ware (28 items, some composed of multiple fragments), mainly belonging to production D, with a significant presence of Hayes 109 plates. Despite being a less significant percentage, Late Roman C is also documented (16 items, most of them belonging to the type Hayes 10). An important number of amphora sherds were also found in the dump (419 fragments). Among these it is crucial to highlight the presence of many *spatheia* LR8 and LR5, belonging to the 6th and 7th centuries AD, and fragments of Cretan amphoras of the TRC4 and TRC10 types, the circulation of which goes beyond the 7th century AD. Moreover, many fragments of Byzantine lamps *a fiaschetta* were found (83 items), which, although awaiting further studies, can be placed in a timespan that goes from the 4th to the 9th century AD. Given this brief overview of the material², the dump is dated to the 8th century AD, and the material found can be placed in a period that undoubtedly extends from the 4th to the 8th century, with most finds belonging to the 6th and the 7th century.

As Enrico Zanini states in a recent article (Zanini 2010), rubbish dumps are interesting contexts that can provide important information about life in a neighbourhood and, ultimately, in a city, during a given period. These contexts relate to the habits of people living and working in houses and workshops. Therefore, by studying the finds from this kind of dumps, it is possible to gather information about material classes and associations of classes and types in specific contexts or periods, the reuse of certain categories of items, how the neighbourhood was organised and how it managed its rubbish (Zanini highlights that the area within which the University of Siena excavates, together with adjacent areas, seems to be characterised by a network of smaller and bigger rubbish dumps that he is investigating with his team. From these dumps, a considerable amount of pottery emerged, especially amphoras and coarse wares but not as many table-ware fragments. These data contrast with the characterisation of the material of our dump. Zanini points out that some categories of pottery are absent from the dumps, especially tiles and *spatheia*, which are, therefore, considered the most reused items in the area. See: Zanini 2010).

Cooking Ware

It is interesting to note the significantly greater number of cooking pots compared to the number of other forms of cooking ware. To be specific, of 26 recognised items (mostly rims and related sherds), 22 are identifiable as cooking pots. Most of them (17 items) belong to a type with an elongated and rounded, everted rim, with a ledge inside for the lid to sit on, a sloping neck, two large, thin, grooved handles set just below the rim and ending on the shoulder, which is often defined by a ridge (**fig. 2** and **6, 1**). The type (Sirano C I 1.1/4) can be associated with the group that Martin (1997b: 354-355, tab. CXXVIII) defines as very common in Gortyn between the 4th and the 7th century. According to Rendini, (1988: 253-261), this type can be compared to a group of Samian cooking pots of the early Byzantine period. As also attested by the evidence of the SU presented here, in Gortyn, many variations of the rim shape (**fig. 2**), show a reception of the eastern model as well as a local manifestation that awaits further studies to determine a local/regional evolution since some variation of the type seems to have been in use at least until the late 8th century. The fabric of this group of cooking pots has been associated with the local mixture, but some more micaceous variations await further analysis.

The remaining cooking pots belong to different types. One small fragment is identifiable as the type Martin describes as *orli semplici verticali o quasi verticali*, which characterise cooking pots with distinct vertical rims and vertical handles. These cooking pots find parallels in Knossos and are documented in Gortyn in layers that can be dated between the end of the 6th and the 7th century AD, even though the type is reported to have spread until the 8th century (Martin 1997b: 353, tab. CXXVI). Another cooking pot (**fig. 3, 1**) with a similar rim to that of the main group but with no neck and a different handle, pseudo-oval in section, can be compared with a cooking pot from the Deposit 32 of the *Excavation*

² For the overview on the pottery found in the dump, but also for her guidance and our daily conversations on ceramic studies, I sincerely thank Marzia Giuliadori, who has also taught me many of the things that I know about pottery and, specifically, about Gortyn's productions and imports. The data on the amphoras was provided by Simone Marcolini.

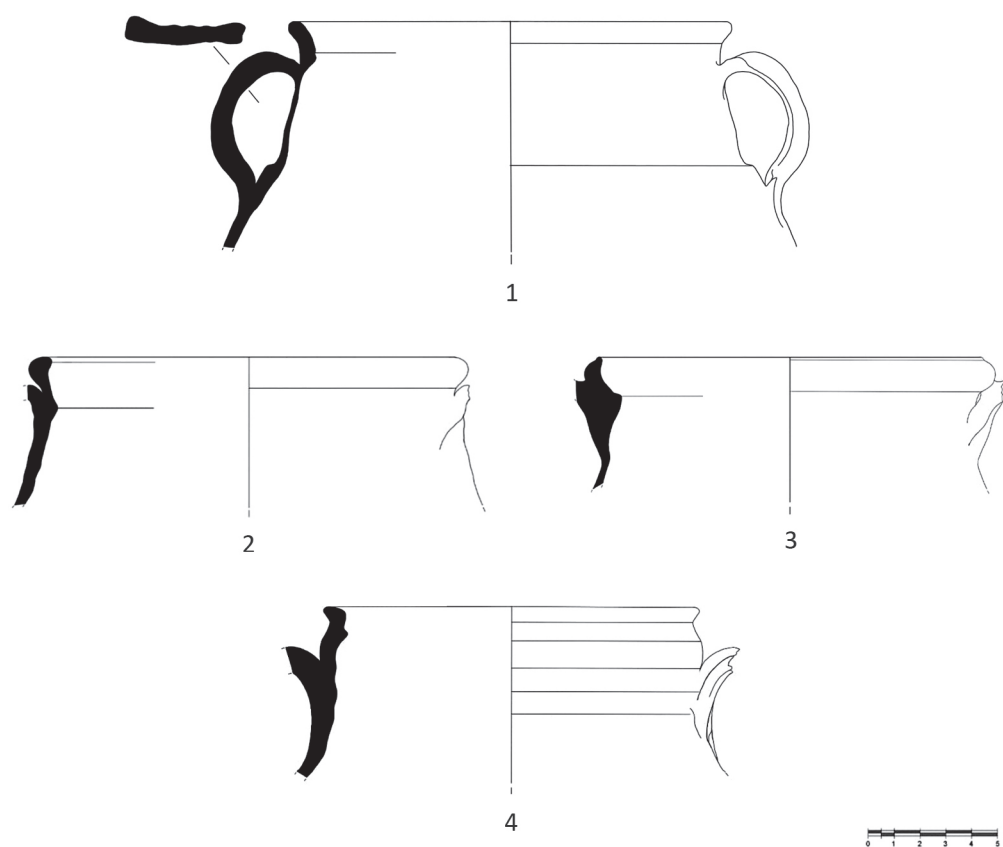


Fig. 2. Comparison between cooking ware cooking pots of the same type.

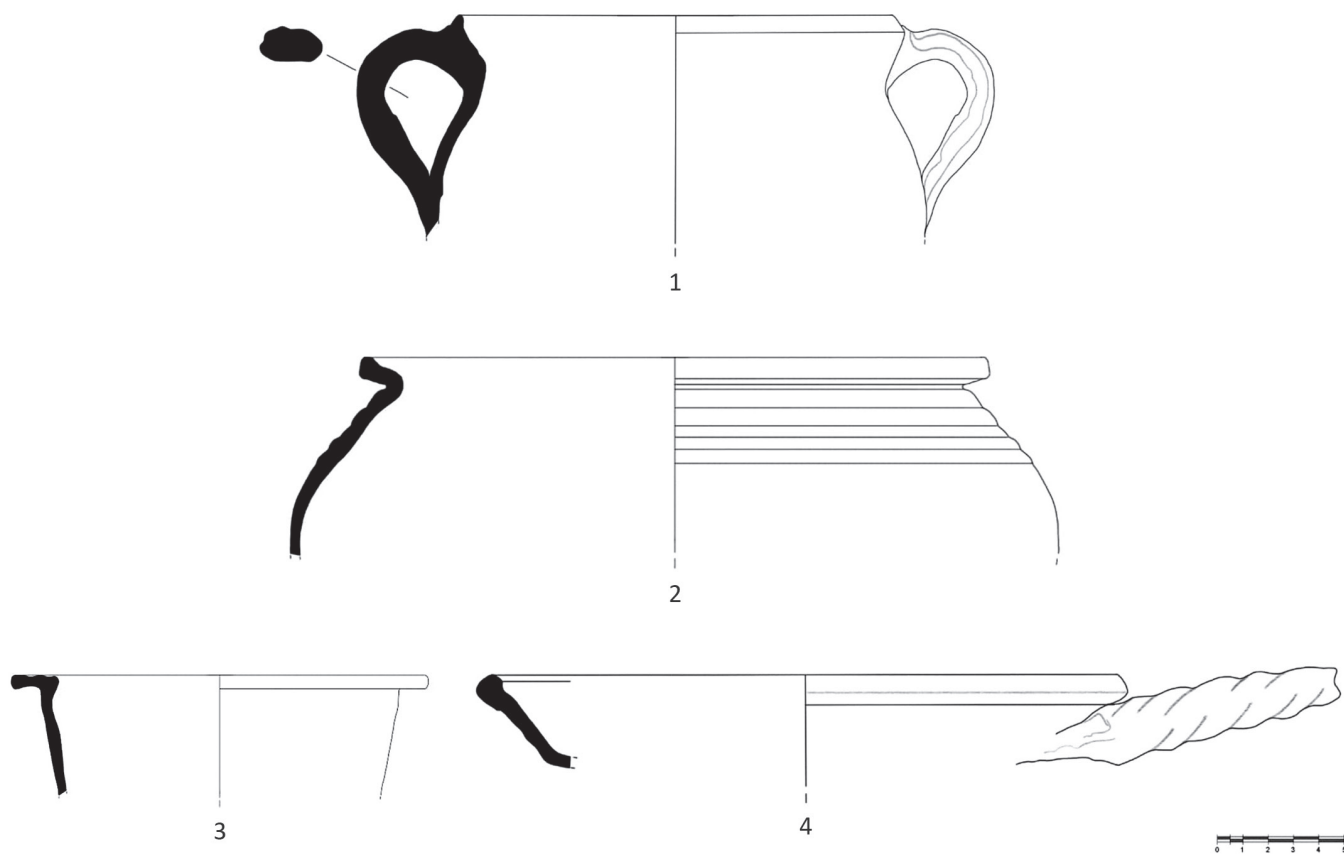


Fig. 3. Cooking ware pottery from SU 1004.

at *Saraçhane* (Hayes 1992: 107, fig. 52, 12) which is dated to the 8th century AD, although some material, like the pot mentioned, may belong to the 7th century.

It may be worth highlighting the presence of a globular cooking pot (**fig. 3, 2** and **6, 2**) with an everted, almost horizontal rim and the upper part of the body of which shows grooves due to the use of the potter's wheel. The outer surface has traces of a reddish-brownish engobe. This piece finds a parallel in the group of *Marmites locales, à bord horizontal, lèvres arrondies* from Eleutherna, which Yangaki has identified as a local production mostly belonging to the 4th century (Yangaki 2005: 167-168, fig. 37, f). Moreover, this specific fragment has a fabric that does not belong to the local group α but shows characteristics that could classify it as an import.

Among the cooking ware pottery found in the dump, two other shapes are recognisable: one pan (*tegame/pentola*) and two frying pans (one is only a small fragment). The first shape (**fig. 3, 3**) belongs to Martin's group of cooking pots 72 and 73 (generally dated to the 6th century AD. Martin 1997b: 360, tab. CXXXIV.1-2) but, like Martin's examples, it does not find many convincing parallels (some features can be compared to those of the plain ware bowl VIII 3.2/1. See: Albertocchi and Perna 2000: 432). In *Gortina V* the type corresponds to the shape of a deep bowl in plain ware from the *Praetorium* excavations, where it is stated that a similar fragment comes from a context of the Byzantine Houses dated to the 7th century AD (Martin 1997b: 301, tab. LXI.5). The general shape recalls the *marmite type Sidi Jdidi 8* that Bonifay dates to the second half of the 5th century AD (Bonifay 2004: 236, fig. 127). The frying pan (**fig. 3, 4**) is similar to the one found in the excavation at the Byzantine Houses Quarter (courtyard and area of the Fountain 4) published by Perna (2010: 917, fig. 15). It is a shallow pan with sloping walls, a thickened rim and a twisted handle with a pseudo-cylindrical section. Compared to this, the frying pan from the dump shows an inner offset of the rim, probably intended for the lid (the type is identical to the one Turnovsky places in the first half of the 7th century at Ephesos. See: Turnovsky 2005: 636, fig. 2.5). The type is attested in Gortyn during the 7th century AD, but Perna argues that the one from the Byzantine Houses belongs to a layer from the 6th century and finds parallels in pots from Berenice, also dated between the 4th and the 6th centuries AD (Perna 2010: 917; for the frying pans in Gortyn see: Martin 1997b: 361, n. 86).

Plain Ware

Among the 86 rims recognisable as plain-ware pottery, 16 are identifiable as basins, 14 as jars, 6 as mugs, and 21 as jugs (some of them are difficult to identify since neck and rim are not sufficiently preserved), only 4 as bowls. The rest of the fragments belong to lids or items that cannot be classified with precision (e.g., some are clearly closed forms, but it is unclear whether they are jugs, pitchers, or jars).

Given this overview, it is possible to highlight the presence of a significant number of basins, a pattern that has already been identified in the previous studies of Gortyn.

As suggested for the group of cooking pots, as the study proceeds, coarse-ware basins may also benefit from a chronological definition of some variations in types. In SU 1004, we have indeed found a significant number of basins with similar yet different rims (**fig. 4**). The numerous fragments, sometimes belonging to a single vessel and, in some cases, showing variation in the rim shape on the same item, have suggested that these basins be grouped together. These variations in rim shape have been interpreted as a possible manifestation of a single type of basin. Some of the variations are comparable to a group that, in *Gortina V*, would be classified as B VI. The form is a low basin with a hanging projecting rim, the body sometimes decorated with incised waves (**fig. 6, 3**). The most common rim shape has already been recognised as frequent in the 7th century and confirmed in the 8th (Albertocchi and Perna 2000: 439-444). All the fragments seem to be produced in the local fabric (mainly Ia and c, which awaits further analysis), and, given the number of rim variations, it may be possible, with further studies, to define a chronological evolution of the local type up to the later phases of the building and/or to identify possible different production workshops.

It is possible to propose a distinction between the small jars with a vertical, slightly flaring neck and undistinguished, variously shaped, rim (slightly projecting or tapered rounded). This distinction can be drawn between pots belonging to the same shape-category of jars (**fig. 5, 3**) and beakers (**fig. 5, 2**), which are characterised by thinner walls, especially towards the neck and rim. The former can be associated with the jars



Fig. 4. Comparison between basins from SU 1004.

B II 1.1/4, even though the sherds from the dump have a straighter neck (Perna reports this type to be comparable to a cooking pot analysed by Martin and belonging to the late 6th or the 7th century AD. See: Albertocchi and Perna 2000: 491). The latter beakers are reported to be frequent in Gortyn only during the Byzantine period. Among the dump finds, the vessels identified as mugs can be compared with type II 1.1/2, which is characterised by a globular body shape clearly distinguished from the neck. This type is one of the most frequent in Gortyn during the 7th century AD. Its shape is also common in the *sovradipinta* ware (Albertocchi and Perna 2000: 436-438), and it finds parallels, especially in Eleutherna (the form that Yangaki describes as *tasses qui ont une base aplatie, une panse globulaire, un col large et un bord droit ou peu évasé, à lèvre arrondie ou amincie* are usually characterised by a white engobe, they all have a vertical handle, rounded in section finishing on the under the shoulder of the vase. Among these beakers, the ones found in tombs are dated to the second half

of the 7th century AD (Yangaki 2005:127-130, fig. 14, c).

Two items belong to the beaker type I 1.4/1 (fig. 5, 1), even though the handle is not preserved. Albertocchi has associated the beaker with a Knossian type of the 7th century (Albertocchi and Perna 2000: 438, tab. XCVIII).

Some fragments can be identified as jugs or pitchers, but they are all very small, and the neck is poorly preserved. It is, therefore, risky to propose a classification or to determine whether it has a trilobed rim or not in case they are jugs. Some of them have moulded rims, and one fragment (fig. 5, 6) seems to be comparable to Martin's *bottiglia* 386 (Martin 1997a: 337, tab. CXIV.5) but also with a very similar jug from Eleutherna (Vogt 2000: 70, fig. 21.2). The fact that very similar shapes are sometimes associated slightly differently in typology groups clearly illustrates the challenge of a clear attribution of these items, as well as an unavoidable necessary arbitrariness in determining the characteristics that make a shape fit in one category or another.

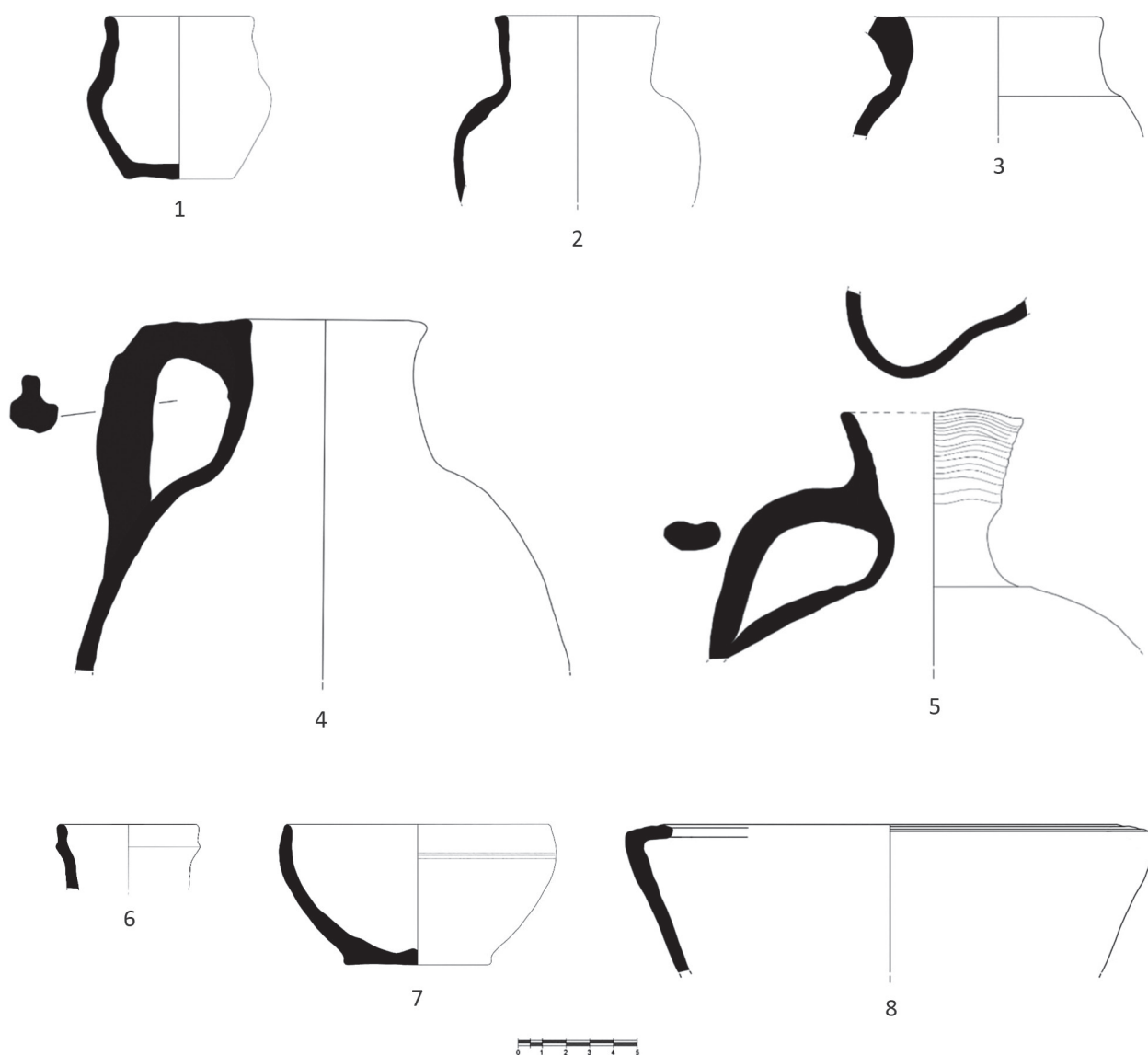


Fig. 5. Plain ware pottery from SU 1004.



Fig. 6. Pictures of: (1) cooking ware cooking pot type Sirano C I 1.1/4; (2) cooking ware imported (?) cooking pot; (3) example of a typical decoration on basins

Only one pitcher (**fig. 5, 4**) preserves a large portion of the rim, neck, and shoulder; the handle, with a protruding central ridge, is also preserved, and its upper part is attached to the rim, while its lower part ends below the shoulder of the vase. This belongs to the group of large pitchers identified by Martin, specifically to the group with projecting rims on a straight neck (Martin 1997a: 331-332). It can be compared with the type A II 3.2/2, at least with regards to the rim shape; the handle seems slightly different, although it is difficult to say so with certainty, as the fragment described by Perna is poorly preserved. Type A II 3.2/2 is compared to a similar one from Argos, belonging to a context of the 6th century AD (Albertocchi and Perna 2000: 508). The handle and overall shape, recalling the pitcher A V 2.4/1, may be a sign of the fact that some less well-preserved sherds can be grouped into a single type with some variations. Two other small fragments seem to be a variation of the rim of the same type.

A fragment of a small pitcher with a globular body, flared neck and trilobed rim merits specific mention (**fig. 5, 5**). The type, already known in Gortyn, has parallels in Eleutherna and, in general, in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean between the 6th and the 7th centuries. The fragment seems to be of local production (Fabric Ia) and can be associated with the later variations of the type known in the Mediterranean.

Of the few fragments identifiable as bowls, one example finds a parallel in the group that Martin defines as “unusual” and includes bowls with in-turned, grooved rims (**fig. 5, 8**). The type is already known in Crete and reported to be Roman, dating between the 2nd and the 4th centuries AD. Some of these examples in Gortyn have been found in the Byzantine Houses in layers dated to the 7th century (Martin 1997a: 301-302, n. 61-70).

One small bowl (**fig. 5, 7**) may be identified as an import because of its fabric, which is different from the samples recognised as local, bright red in section, with small white inclusions. Given the characteristics of the fabric seen under the lens of a microscope, it could be an African import. The bowl has an undistinguished rim, slightly tapered, a flat, barely shaped, low foot, umbilicate on the inside, with remains of a lightly grooved decoration ca. 1 cm below the rim.

Fabrics

Reflections on fabric groups were possible due to the work of a research team³ that has sampled the main fabrics identified during the works for *Gortina II* and *V* in order to submit them for petrographic analysis. This analysis was carried out within the framework of the project “Pythagoras II”, started by Poulou-Papadimitriou in 2005. Some of the preliminary results are already available, especially concerning the local fabric (Poulou-Papadimitriou and Nodarou 2014: 876, Fig. 14), and further studies and investigations are currently ongoing on the subject (an overview of the fabrics of Gortyn will be published in the upcoming volume about the so-called *Case Bizantine*, for the *Gortina* series of the Italian Archaeological School at Athens). With specific reference to the fabric groups mentioned here, it is essential to clarify that, due to the progression of the pottery study in Gortyn, in the last few years, some rearrangement to the research classification of fabrics has been made. The analyses that have been carried out and the results of these analyses, as well as the remaining doubts and the analyses yet to be done, have led us to classify the fabrics found in Gortyn as follows.

In plain wares, Groups I, II, and OD1 (*opus doliare*) correspond to the sample groups analysed that have provided clear results. With some variations (Ia, b and c), primarily due to the refinement degree of the fabric, Group I has been recognised as local and described as fine, red with small quartz fragments and clay pellets, micrite and occasionally fossils. As well as plain ware, Cretan amphoras and *sovradipinta* ware belong to this group. The rest of the groups, which include all the previously recognised groups from *Gortina V* (Albertocchi and Perna 2000: 414-416), await further clarification by new analysis. Therefore, they have been temporarily classified with letters from *a* to *m*. Among

³ The team was coordinated by Maria Antonietta Rizzo and is composed of Marina Albertocchi, Marzia Giuliadori, Roberto Perna and Elisa Chiara Portale. My sincere gratitude goes here especially to Roberto Perna who first shared with me her profound understanding of Cretan productions and to Marina Albertocchi, whose precious help and guidance on fabrics has been crucial to my understanding of Gortyn production.

these groups, it is worth mentioning *group g*, which includes the samples R and M of *Gortina V*, and it is thought to be local, recurring especially in late items.

The same method has been applied to cooking ware fabrics. The only group that Nodarou's analysis has confirmed is the *group a*, which is the local one and includes the previous groups CF 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, and 13 (these are Martin's groups, reused by Sirano. See: Martin 1997b: 346-349). All the other groups still await further analysis.

Conclusions and future perspectives

Gortyn's great vitality, especially during the 6th and 7th centuries is fully corroborated by a brief overview of the most attested types of vases in the dump and the focus on specific items. Local productions and some imports testify to the city's position both in the regional context and in the Aegean and eastern networks. Moreover, the significant number of variations of some shapes in one of the later contexts of the Southern Building suggests the possibility of defining, with further studies, the evolution of some types, possibly until the 8th century and later. The significant amount of pottery from Dump 1004 has offered the opportunity to reconsider some classifications. Two important considerations should be made about the proposed overview of the material from SU 1004. Firstly, it is important to note the presence of similar, yet different, kinds of pots detected in a dump with material ranging from the 4th until the 8th century AD. Secondly, it is crucial to highlight that the comparison with published types shows remarkable similarities and some significant variations,

suggesting, in some cases, a need for a reorganisation of the typology. Thus, it is critical to consider the possibility of a linear typology. However, the process is complex and requires a solid chronological context and a vast amount of data. As Reynolds proposes in a recent article (Reynolds 2009), the possibility of recognising some shapes and variants as manifestations of a single type of vessel could provide an interesting new perspective on pottery study (as Reynolds points out, one should, with enough data and a different approach to classification, be able to recognise, for each *type* the different *forms*, i.e., shapes, in which a *type* can develop in time, and the multiple *variants* that each form can assume depending on the workshops). In order to do so it is, of course, necessary to have access to data from extensive excavation and to have the opportunity to trace the possible evolution of some types through the centuries. Therefore, the data available for the pottery from Gortyn may be a starting point for a similar approach. The classification made by Albertocchi and Perna, although needing some reorganisation to create groups of similar pots more clearly recognisable, has the great advantage of giving each variation a name and a description, and of not losing sight of the stratigraphical data. The publication of the entire catalogue, the further studies yet to be published, and the ongoing studies allow us to link each object with the stratigraphy and the fabric groups. This may be enough to make it possible, in the future, to draw up a linear typology, at least for some types of cooking or plain-ware vessels.

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