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AEGINETAN COOKING POTTERY IN CENTRAL GREECE AND ITS WIDER PERSPECTIVE*

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INTRODUCTION

Aeginetan pottery is one of the most pleasing and rewarding groups of pottery for a pottery analyst working in the eastern part of the Greek Mainland. The reasons are plentiful. Firstly, the gold mica inclusions¹ as well as distinct decoration, manufacturing method and potmarks, make Aeginetan pottery one of the most easily recognisable imports, inviting discussion of trade connections of a particular site. Secondly, due to the longevity of Aeginetan pottery, it can be found in any deposit ranging in date from the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age until the end of the Late Bronze Age (LBA), which allows for observations of diachronic changes in frequency. Finally, a few comprehensive studies of Aeginetan pottery² provided a precise chronology for many of the shapes, which is helpful for the dating of contexts at sites where this pottery is found. In spite of these assets, Aeginetan ceramics still seem to suffer from insufficient interest by scholars, and this negatively affects the quantity of comparative data.

The characteristics and distinctiveness of Aeginetan pottery were first recognized as early as the beginnings of the 20th century³, yet it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that the works of David French and Carol Zerner⁴ gave the study of Aeginetan ceramics the right pace. Carol Zerner was first to identify the cooking pots of Aeginetan manufacture and describe their fabric and forms. It is interesting to note that this identification took place only after Betancourt and Myer carried out petrographic analysis of the pottery from Lerna⁵. Subsequently, the provenance of cooking pots identified as Aeginetan by macroscopic fabric analysis or petrography was confirmed by chemical analyses⁶. Undoubtedly, the last 20 years have brought a substantial increase in the knowledge of Aeginetan cooking pottery, yet very little about its distribution is known, especially north of Boeotia⁷. Potentially, evidence of Aeginetan pottery found in regions of Central Greece, located far from the place of production (**fig. 1**), can provide insights into a number of questions, such as: What is the difference in the diachronic distribution and frequency of Aeginetan pottery in these regions as compared to areas close to Kolonna? Can differential access to Aeginetan imports be detected among the settlements of Central Greece? What are the local patterns of consumption? Was Aeginetan pottery actively utilized in so-

* The results presented in this paper constitute a part of my ongoing PhD research on the Late Bronze Age cooking pots. In the first place I would like to thank Aleydis Van de Moortel and Eleni Zachou, directors of the Mitrou Archaeological Project, for their invitation to study pottery from the excavation. Salvatore Vitale offered a great cooperation and commented on the first drafts of this paper. I am grateful to the Foundation for Polish Science, which provided me with additional funding for my research in 2009. Drawings of Mitrou material were made by Marcia DeVoe, Julia Pfaff, Nick Wright and (mostly) Tina Ross, who also did all of the inkings. I owe my thanks also to Maria Kostoula for Greek translation of the summary.

Note: Central Greece, as defined here, does not include the region of Attica.

1. Another important type of inclusion, particularly helpful in macroscopic identification of Aeginetan cooking pottery, is hornblende, a black, angular and spicule-like inclusion.

2. Zerner 1986, Maran 1992, Lindblom 2001.

3. Fimmen 1921, Harland 1925.

4. French 1972, Zerner 1986.

5. Zerner 1986, 65-6.

6. Mommsen *et al.* 2001; Mommsen 2003.

7. See map in Rutter 1993, fig. 12.

cial interactions? Of course these questions refer to all classes of Aeginetan pottery⁸, and in this paper, while concentrating on the cooking pottery, I will attempt to outline a general picture for all of them.

DEVELOPMENT OF AEGINETAN COOKING POTS

Before turning to the evidence from Central Greece, it is worth outlining the basic development of Aeginetan cooking pottery. This can be subdivided into three broad stages with turning points around the Middle Helladic (MH) III and Late Helladic (LH) IIIA phases. This division seems to be roughly applicable to other classes of Aeginetan pottery as well.

Aeginetan cooking pots of the first stage, dated in the early and middle parts of the Middle Helladic period and paralleled with Kolonna settlement phases VIII and IX⁹, are characterized by two forms –the large handleless jar and a smaller jug with a high-swung handle and a raised base (**fig. 2**). For its dimensions, the first form can be interpreted as a storage jar rather than a cooking pot, although it might have fulfilled a variety of functions. Cooking pots at this stage were marked by potters on the shoulders (**fig. 2**)¹⁰ in contrast to other classes of contemporary Aeginetan pottery that received potmarks around the base or handle.

Towards the end of the MH period, during Kolonna phase X, a new type of cooking pot was introduced –a shoulder-handled jug (with only one handle) with long everted rim and well-defined raised base (**fig. 3**). At the same time the potmarks changed location from the shoulder to the base or, less frequently, to the lower handle attachment¹¹. The old forms, in particular the rim-handled jug, were still present, but they disappeared with the onset of the Late Bronze Age. Two other forms belonging to cooking pottery seem to have been exported from Kolonna together with the shoulder-handled jar in this phase, the tripod and the lid (**fig. 3**), but they are both uncommon¹².

The latest cooking pots of the type introduced at the end of the MH period, featuring long everted rim and usually thick raised base (**fig. 3**), are attested in LH IIB/IIIA¹³ deposits. Some decades later, already in the palatial period, new types of cooking pots are introduced and they continue into the LH IIIC period. Importantly, they became the only ceramic products exported from Aegina. Since no settlement levels belonging to this stage (LH IIIA2-LH IIIC) have been excavated at Kolonna¹⁴, most of our information about these new forms comes from other settlements. Three types are found in quantity on the Greek Mainland: the two-handled jar¹⁵ and the one- and two-handled tripods; all have their handles starting from a short everted rim (**fig. 4**). The pot marks are now placed below the handles and only rarely on the bases. Other attested shapes in cooking pot fabric include lids, basins, spouted kraters and carinated tripods, but they are all rather infrequent¹⁶. The end of this stage of Aeginetan production and exportation is difficult to determine, but it seems that the cooking pot industry survived the upheaval at the end of the LH IIB period¹⁷.

AEGINETAN POTTERY IN CENTRAL GREECE

After this general introduction, the finds from Central Greece can be presented in a proper setting. As it will be shown, these finds not only enrich our knowledge of the distribution of Aeginetan pottery, but they

8. Other identified classes of Aeginetan pottery comprise Painted and Burnished, Bichrome, Matt Painted, Plain, and Dark Burnished (Lindblom 2001).

9. Gauss – Smetana 2007, fig. B.

10. Lindblom 2001, Gauss – Smetana 2007.

11. Lindblom 2001, Gauss – Smetana 2007.

12. Lindblom 2007.

13. Mountjoy 1981, Mommsen 2003.

14. Apart from an LH IIIA kiln; Gauss 2007.

15. There are only very few possible examples of one-handled jars (cf. an example from Iria, Döhl 1973, 167, Abb. 14.B23 executed in fabric called Sandige Ware I, which according to the author's examination is Aeginetan fabric). Even if they all are confirmed as true Aeginetan products, their number is far smaller than that of the known two-handled examples.

16. For lids and basins, see Marabea 2007, figs. 3, 5; for carinated tripods, see Lindblom 2001, Pl. 51.1043; for spouted kraters, see Döhl 1973, A27, 173, Taf. 74.2 (confirmed by author).

17. Lindblom 2001, see also below.

can shed light on some aspects of its production as well. This part of research is based mostly on material from the site of Mitrou¹⁸.

The first stage (MH I-II)

There is not much evidence for any type of Aeginetan pottery in Central Greece during this stage. Some Aeginetan Matt Painted specimens have been identified in Boeotia, including an elaborately painted jar from Eutresis and a large barrel jar from Orchomenos, which undoubtedly represent important objects of display¹⁹. J. Maran speaks of possible imports at Velestino, whereas he did not find evidence for Aeginetan pottery in the MH material from Pefkakia. However, he convincingly interpreted a class of pottery termed 'Magnesia polychrome' as an imitation of Aeginetan Matt Painted pottery in terms of shapes as well as decorative syntax. The evidence gathered by him suggests both selective distribution of Aeginetan pottery as well as the possibility that the prestigious connotations of such pottery led to imitation²⁰. At Mitrou, there are rare fragments of large barrel-jars and of Aeginetan cooking pots in the rich early and middle MH levels.

The second stage (MH III²¹-LH IIIA2: Early)

The second stage of Aeginetan pottery production, and particularly the beginning of the LBA, is characterized by a sudden boom in the consumption of Aeginetan ceramics in southern Greece, both at settlements with substantial amounts of Aeginetan imports already in the MH period and at those sites that used to have only limited access to this pottery²². At Mitrou, the situation appears to be similar, yet with a certain time-shift. The Aeginetan cooking pottery shows up in the LH I phase at Mitrou in some quantity, but it is the ensuing LH II phase at the site that is associated with a peak of consumption of Aeginetan pottery, including cooking pots. Altogether Aeginetan imports make up 10% of the whole LH II pottery assemblage (Table 1). The first indication of this outburst of popularity is a late LH I or early LH IIA deposit from trench LF790 at Mitrou²³, which in terms of Aeginetan pottery frequencies is similar to deposits containing LH IIA and LH IIB pottery (Table 1). For now it is impossible to tell whether the LH IIB phase witnessed already a decline in the consumption of Aeginetan pottery at Mitrou, yet some homogenous but altogether small deposits from the northeastern area of the island suggest that this might have been the case. By the LH IIIA1 phase the picture of decline seems to be assured, although the single deposit is small. The ceramically rich LH IIIA2 Early horizon provides an interesting picture concerning the survival of Aeginetan imports. On the one hand, a large dump from trench LP785, located north of Building D, contains mendable fragments of an Aeginetan cooking pot, whose rather unusual morphology suggests that it can belong to the latest examples of the shoulder-handled variety (fig. 5). On the other hand, deposit from Building F in trench LN784 contains restorable fragments of several cooking pots, but they are exclusively of non-Aeginetan origin²⁴. These detailed chronological considerations might not be considered as important if it was not for the fact that the deposits in question offer a unique opportunity to capture, with a high chronological precision, the moment of an interruption in Aeginetan pottery exports²⁵.

The most frequent shape in Early Mycenaean levels at Mitrou is the shoulder-handled jug, which comes in a variety of sizes, its rim diameters ranging between 10 and 25 cm, with a single instance of ca. 33 cm. The

18. For general information about the site, see Van de Moortel – Zachou 2006; Van de Moortel 2007; Van de Moortel 2009; Van de Moortel – Zachou this volume.

19. Sarri 2007, fig. 1.9, fig. 2.5.

20. Maran 2007. He also suggested (Maran 2007, 147) that a distinct shoulder-handled cooking pot (Maran 1992, 145, pl. 73:2-4.6) that appeared together with pottery of the Magnesia polychrome class was either an Aeginetan import or an imitation thereof. However, this suggestion must be questioned because the chronological position of this type of cooking pot at Pefkakia (phase 6 Early, according to Maran 1992 Abb. 25 to be synchronized with the earlier part of MH and Kolonna Town IX) precedes the appearance of such a cooking pot type at Kolonna itself (Town X, MH III).

21. The evidence for the MH III period is very scarce in Central Greece so far, with obvious consequences for the study of Aeginetan imports.

22. Asine: Dietz 1991, Tsoungiza: Rutter 1989 and 1990.

23. See Vitale, this volume; Van de Moortel – Zachou, this volume.

24. See Vitale 2008 and Vitale, this volume.

25. Another deposit of the same date comes from Tsoungiza, a site that yielded considerable amounts of Aeginetan pottery in previous periods. The quantities of Aeginetan cooking pots are very low, consist of individual fragments, and can be interpreted as intrusions (Lis 2008).

other shape present is the tripod, which is a rare find even in southern Greece. Interestingly, both base fragments of tripods came from the vicinity of Building D, the monumental structure in the central area²⁶.

The potmarks (**fig. 6**) represent almost every variety defined by M. Lindblom (2001). Interestingly, among the corpus of ca. 40 Early Mycenaean potmarks discovered so far, there are quite a few that belong to either previously unknown types or are attested in only a few instances (e.g. LE793-012-011, LP785-026-011). The extant material seems to suggest that every single imported cooking pot had a mark. Unfortunately, there is no comparative material to investigate frequency of marking at other sites with a similar degree of detail. Nevertheless, figures from the fill of the shaft graves at Lerna suggest that the frequency there was slightly lower: roughly every second cooking pot was marked²⁷.

It is rather difficult at this point to discuss an intriguing question of spatial differences in distribution of Aeginetan pottery at the settlement of Mitrou. Precondition to such a study is a detailed chronological study of each of the important contexts, which presently is being undertaken.

The third stage (LH IIIA2:Late-LH IIIC)

The importance of finds from Mitrou is strengthened by the fact that they allow us to date the beginning of the last stage of Aeginetan cooking pottery production with chronological precision. Stratified material from the LH IIIA2 Late phase at Mitrou leaves no doubt that both the flat-based jars and tripods (like the ones reproduced on **fig. 4**) were present already in that chronological stage. It is difficult to address the issue of their general frequency because these deposits, deriving mainly from street levels, contain only small amounts of undecorated pottery. However, among the fragments identified as belonging to cooking pots the Aeginetan component makes up roughly 20%. More data is available for the LH IIIB2 Late phase. At this time the frequency of Aeginetan cooking pottery is extraordinarily high, with more than 45% of cooking pottery fragments made of clay characteristic for Aegina (**Table 1**). Among the mendable cooking pot fragments, Aeginetan ones even seem to represent the majority. The number of potmarks is low, comprising only one secure and one possible example. As for the following LH IIIC period, it is difficult to determine when Aeginetan exports ended at Mitrou. The deposit from trench LM786 in the area northeast of Buildings D and B²⁸, although not entirely homogenous, provides modest evidence for the survival of Aeginetan cooking pots into the LH IIIC period. The precise chronological position of this deposit is not clarified yet, but its many common characteristics with the pottery of the LH IIIB2 Late period are suggest temporal proximity²⁹.

The potmarks of the cooking pots from the third stage at Mitrou are mostly standard simple cuts placed around the lower handle attachment (**fig. 7**). However, there is a small group of potmarks placed on bases that either derive from clear palatial-period contexts or, in terms of base shape and fabric, belong to the third stage. This leaves no doubt that the Early Mycenaean tradition of placement of potmarks on bases continued at least until the beginning of the third stage. Such a practice has not been noticed at any other site so far.

The third stage of the development is the first one for which other settlements of Central Greece provide a good deal of information about Aeginetan cooking pottery. From the floor deposit of House V at Eutresis, datable to late LH IIIB or early LH IIIC, there came a very small two-handled tripod of Aeginetan provenance³⁰. Unfortunately it is unknown whether the rich LH IIIB2 deposits from Thebes, which would offer a valuable comparison with the settlement of Mitrou, contained any quantities of Aeginetan pottery; however, such a comparison is possible with the Mycenaean settlement of Dimini. All cooking pots³¹ published so far are of Aeginetan provenance and all are of the tripod form. Interestingly, they all bear potmarks, in contrast with the scarcity of potmarks in the LH IIIB2 Late deposit from Mitrou. The rich stratified LH IIIC deposits from Lefkandi could shed light on the question of the end of exports from Aegina. During a visit to

26. See Van de Moortel – Zachou, this volume.

27. Lindblom 2007, Lis 2008. The only confirmed example of an unmarked cooking pot comes from an LH I context at Tsoungiza (Rutter 1989, fig. 6.17).

28. Van de Moortel – Zachou, this volume.

29. The deposit has been presented in Rutter 2007, where it was preliminarily dated to the early stage of LH IIIC Middle. According to observations mentioned above, an even earlier date should not be excluded.

30. Mountjoy 1983, 98, fig. 39.148; Goldman 1931, 189, fig. 263.6, pl. 19c. I would like to thank V. Aravantinos and Y. Fappas for allowing me to examine this pot during the summer of 2009.

31. Adrimi-Sismani 2006, 43, fig. 27, 28.

the Eretria museum in March 2008 I had the opportunity to examine the cooking pots from that site. One of the tripods from phase 1a³² had a simple potmark on one handle and displayed all the characteristics of Aeginetan manufacture down to the smallest detail. However, its fabric resembles, but is not exactly the same, local cooking pots. I would not be inclined to term this pot an imitation, as it is possible for a potter to imitate decoration or general shape but not the motor habits of a different production tradition³³ and it is unlikely that he/she would imitate slight details of manufacture that are not important for the general appearance. Therefore, I would argue that the pot was made by a person who was trained to make pots in the Aeginetan tradition. Apart from this vase, it was possible to identify one example of a true Aeginetan cooking pot in a good context of phase 1a. Extremely rich deposits of the following phase 1b, including dozens of mendable cooking pots, did not contain any Aeginetan cooking pottery. Therefore Lefkandi provides evidence for the end of Aeginetan exports at that site towards the end of LH IIIC Early, and it attests to a new phenomenon – itinerant Aeginetan potters. Aeginetan cooking pottery has been also noted in deposits from Lamia-Frantzi³⁴, dating to the palatial period, and in the survey material from Ancient Halos³⁵, providing an interesting picture of a dense distribution along a sea-route in this part of Greece.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the scarcity of data from Central Greece, any meaningful conclusions drawn in the present stage of my study must be restricted to the settlement of Mitrou. The large amounts of Aeginetan cooking pottery identified at this site are undoubtedly connected with its favourable location on the coast of the North Euboean Gulf, along a protected sea route. Mitrou's position in the settlement hierarchy and aspirations of local elite must have played an important role as well. The latter might have been the reason for a surge in imports of Aeginetan ceramics, including cooking pots, at the transition to the LH II phase. Pottery from Aegina might have been utilized to distinguish its users from other social groups or inhabitants of other settlements, and to show links with the powerful centre in the south. It is remarkable that this process is somewhat delayed at Mitrou in comparison with southern Greece. This might be connected with a decreased demand for Aeginetan ceramics in the Argolid following the LH I period. In the late pre-palatial period, however, the consumption of Aeginetan cooking pots at Mitrou decreases rapidly. This probably was a result of two reinforcing factors – the diminishing political and economic role of Kolonna and the increased competition provided by local (or at least not obviously imported) wheelmade cooking pottery. It is significant that in the contexts of a large-scale food preparation and ritual eating and drinking activities of the LH IIIA2 Early phase³⁶, only the latter, i.e. 'local' and wheelmade, cooking pots were used. This situation is closely paralleled in a contemporary feasting deposit from Tsoungiza³⁷.

The decline in Aeginetan imports at Mitrou seems to be reversed at the beginning of the palatial period and by its end the situation is truly intriguing. Plausibly every second cooking pot in the kitchens of Mitrou was imported from Aegina. How can one explain such a popularity? Definitely, given their amounts, Aeginetan cooking pots did not have an exotic or prestigious *γέυση* anymore. It is plausible that their outstanding functional properties formed a decisive factor. But this alone cannot sufficiently explain such a strong presence of Aeginetan pottery during the third stage. I would like to propose that this situation would not be possible without particular economic, or even political, conditions which created opportunities for such quantities of utilitarian pottery both to be available to settlements located as far north as Mitrou and Dimini, and to compete successfully with the local production. The nature of these conditions constitutes one of the biggest challenges of the ongoing study.

32. Evely 2006, 140, fig. 2.2.8.

33. All other cooking pots from Lefkandi are wheelmade.

34. For Lamia-Franzi, see Karantzali, this volume. I would like to thank Dr. Efi Karantzali for allowing me to mention this information here.

35. Štěpán Růckl, personal communication. The site is also called Voulokalyva 35. The fragment in question is a potmarked handle of a tripod, most probably belonging to the third stage (LH IIIA2-LH IIIC).

36. Vitale 2008.

37. Lis 2008.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

ΧΡΗΣΤΙΚΗ ΚΕΡΑΜΕΙΚΗ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΑΙΓΙΝΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΕΝΤΡΙΚΗ ΕΛΛΑΔΑ ΚΑΙ
ΤΟ ΕΥΡΥΤΕΡΟ ΠΛΑΙΣΙΟ ΤΗΣ

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Στο πλαίσιο του άρθρου εξετάζονται τα δεδομένα σχετικά με τις εξαγωγές αιγινίτικης μαγειρικής κεραμικής στο ανατολικό τμήμα της Κεντρικής Ελλάδας, κυρίως από τη θέση του Μήτρου. Αποτελείται από τρία μέρη. Στο πρώτο μέρος, θα παρουσιαστεί η γενική ανάπτυξη αυτής της κατηγορίας κεραμικής, περιγράφοντας τα βασικά σχήματα και την εξέλιξή τους για καθεμία από τις τρεις χρονολογικές φάσεις. Στο δεύτερο μέρος θα παρουσιασθούν τα δεδομένα από τις τοποθεσίες στην Κεντρική Ελλάδα, τα οποία παρέχουν πληροφορίες όχι μόνον σχετικά με τη διανομή και την κατανάλωση αιγινίτικης μαγειρικής κεραμικής, αλλά και ρίχνουν φως στο πρόβλημα της παραγωγής και της ιστορίας της. Το τρίτο και τελευταίο μέρος του άρθρου επιχειρεί να ερμηνεύσει τα υπάρχοντα δεδομένα σε σχέση με το κοινωνικο-οικονομικό υπόβαθρο τόσο στην Κεντρική, όσο και στη Νότια Ελλάδα.

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Fig. 1. Map of Mainland Greece showing location of sites mentioned in the text.

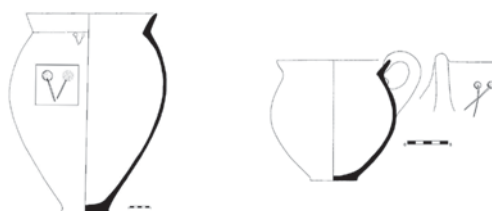


Fig. 2. Aeginetan cooking pots of the first stage of development. After: Lindblom 2001, Pl. 46.979; Pl. 47.994.

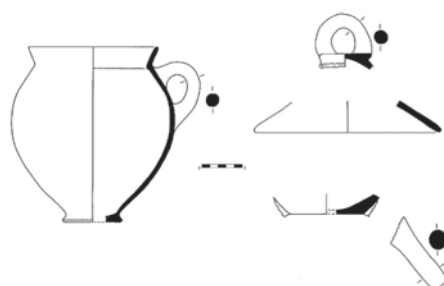


Fig. 3. Aeginetan cooking pots of the second stage of development. After: Lindblom 2007, Fig. 10

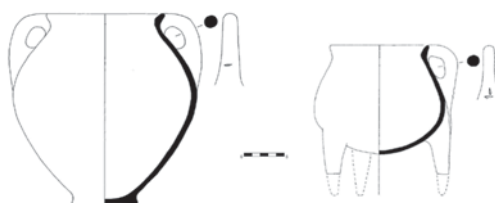


Fig. 4. Aeginetan cooking pots of the third stage of development. After: Lindblom 2001, Pl. 50.1028; Pl.52.1052.

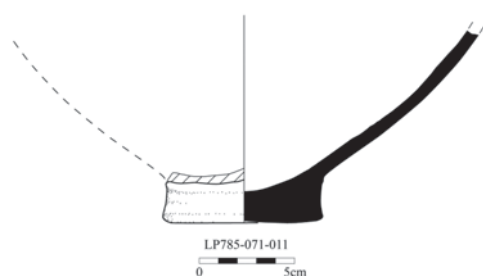


Fig. 5. Mendable Aeginetan cooking pot from Mitrou, LP785-071-011.

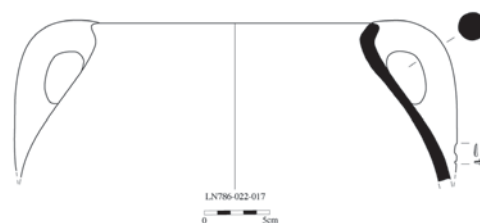


Fig. 7. Aeginetan cooking pot of the third stage of development from Mitrou. LN786-022-017.

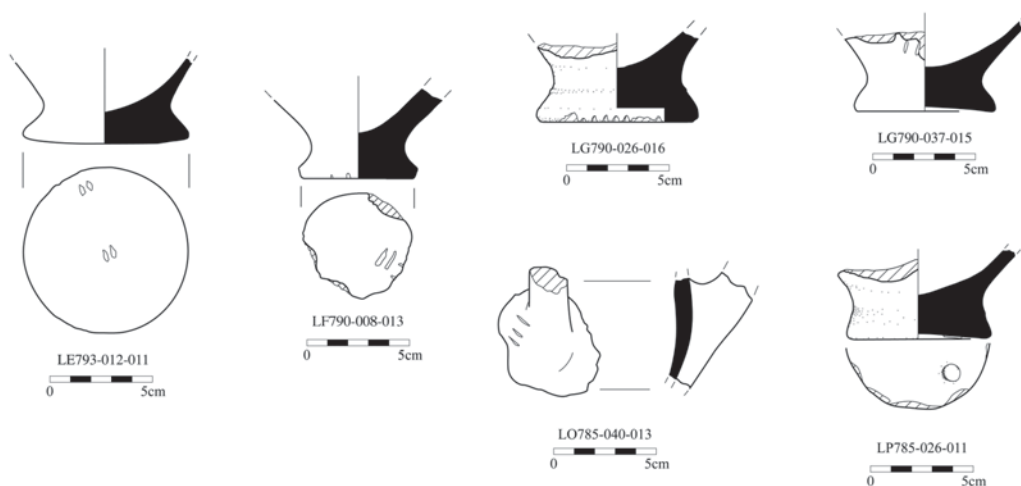


Fig. 6. Examples of potmarks on Aeginetan cooking pots from Mitrou. LE793-012-011, LF790-008-013; LG790-026-016; LG790-037-015; LO785-040-013; LP785-026-011

Date	Total number of sherds	Share of Aeginetan pottery	Share of Aeginetan CPs in total pottery	Share of Aeginetan CPs in total CP
LH I	4294	1,1%	0,6%	3,4%
LH I/IIA (LF 790)	2285	9,7%	2,9%	17,3%
LH II	1911	11,3%	3,3%	22,8%
LH IIIA1	568	3,5%	0,9%	4,7%
LH IIIA2 Late	1659	2,2%	2,2%	20%
LH IIIB2 Late	5475	7,1%	7,1%	45,2%

Data used for calculations for particular periods: LH I: deposits from LE792 and LE793; LH I/IIA: pottery from unit LF790-006; LH II: deposit from LE793; LH IIIA1: deposit from LE795; LH IIIA2 Late: street units LM783-100 and -115; LH IIIB2 Late: dump in trench LP782

Tab. 1. Frequencies of Aeginetan pottery at Mitrou