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LATE ROMAN (LATE 4TH TO 7TH CENTURY) CERAMICS FROM THE PANAYIA FIELD IN CORINTH, GREECE: THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL NETWORKS OF A GLOBALIZED CITY¹

Corinth's position along the empire-wide distribution networks of the Late Roman world allowed it to receive a variety of ceramics imported from long-distance centres, but the city was also supplied by numerous regional (Attic, Boiotian, and southern Argolid) and local sources. Extensive typological and fabric analyses of the ceramic material recovered from the excavations of the Panayia Field in Corinth have provided the opportunity to identify and characterize all of the major local and regional wares supplying the site. While the production and distribution patterns of each naturally evolved and shifted over time, changes at local and regional levels had the potential to affect Corinth's interaction with long distance networks. Likewise, changes in empire-wide patterns could also affect the city's interactions with neighboring regions. The material from the Panayia Field illustrates that the impact of local and regional centres of ceramic production was not geographically limited, but could in fact interact with, influence, and be affected by long distance networks and trends.

Although long-distance imports remain a primary concern in the scholarship of Late Roman ceramics, investigations by the ASCSA at Ancient Corinth have been distinguished by the attention paid to local and regional products.² The current project, focused on the Late Roman (late 4th to 7th century) ceramics recovered from the area of the Panayia Field (situated to the southeast of the Roman Forum), builds upon these previous studies and successfully identifies and characterizes entire groups of local and regional wares, some even with known production sites. These fabrics were thoroughly examined and repeatedly described macroscopically using the standard techniques employed at Corinth Excavations.³ Petrographic analyses and a program of visits to regional archaeological collections proved useful in confirming most of these fabric groups.⁴ Simultaneous study of

the imported wares recovered from the Panayia Field reveals that these three different levels of production and distribution shared various relationships, and that the impact of local and regional wares was not geographically limited.

The most common regionally-sourced fabric recorded in Late Roman contexts in the Panayia Field is southern Argolid fabric. This fabric can be firmly connected with the Argolid's southernmost peninsula due to comparative macroscopic and petrographic study of material previously collected from the coastal kiln site of Kounoupi.⁵ When encountered in thicker-walled coarse wares, the fabric is typically reddish yellow (7.5YR 6/6) with a central core or interior fabric that is red (2.5YR 5/6) to light red (2.5YR 6/6). Fabrics fired completely reddish brown (5YR 4/4) or yellowish red (5YR 5/6) without colour horizons are also attested, with plain ware forms tending to show greater colour variation than amphorae in this fabric. Generally, the fabric is characterized by the presence of lumps of white limestone that are evident in the break and on the surface; sparkling flakes are often evident, but can be very elusive or very prominent in different samples.⁶

¹ This paper focuses on a single aspect of the author's dissertation, *Late Roman Ceramics from the Panayia Field, Corinth (late 4th to 7th c.): The Long-Distance, Regional and Local Wares in their Economic, Social and Historical Contexts* (University of Missouri 2015). The success of this project was realized through the assistance of various individuals and organizations, namely the staff at Corinth Excavations (The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, hereafter ASCSA), but especially Guy D. R. Sanders (director), Christina Kolb and Petros Dellatolas created the drawings and photographs, respectively (both courtesy ASCSA, Corinth Excavations). Research was funded by the ASCSA (Homer A. and Dorothy B. Thompson Fellowship, Henry S. Robinson Corinth Research Fellowship, and Eugene Vanderpool Fellowship) and two grants from the 1984 Foundation. The present article, and the poster upon which it is based, were prepared while serving as the Elisabeth Alföldi-Rosenbaum Fellow (Canadian Institute in Greece).

² See, for example, SLANE/SANDERS 2005; SLANE 2014.

³ These have been published in SANDERS 1999, 477–478.

⁴ Petrographic analyses were carried out by Heather Graybehl, with the results of the Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric and southern Argolid fabric appearing in her thesis, *A Study of Cookwares and Amphorae from Panayia Field, Corinth, Using Petrographic Analysis* (University of Sheffield 2010). A preliminary report was presented at the 114th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) (Seattle 2013), titled "The Production and Distribution of Corinthian Cooking and Southern Argolid fabrics in the Late Roman Northeast

Peloponnesian," by H. Graybehl, S. Ximeri, M. D. Hammond, C. Cloke, and P. M. Day. The results of these and supplementary analyses which focused on the remaining local and regional wares will appear in future reports by Graybehl and Hammond.

⁵ For the kiln from Kounoupi, see M. L. Z. MUNN, *A Late Roman Kiln Site in the Hermionid, Greece*. *Am. Journal Arch.* 89, 1985, 342–343. For publication of the survey evidence, see M. H. JAMESON/C. N. RUNNELS/T. H. VAN ANDEL, *A Greek Countryside: The Southern Argolid from Prehistory to the Present Day* (Stanford 1994) 256; 307; 402; 443–444. The petrographic analysis of this fabric, which includes ten samples from the Kounoupi kiln site, will appear in a forthcoming publication by the author and H. Graybehl.

⁶ With some variation, the fabric is generally characterized by few to frequent very fine to medium sub-rounded calcareous white and off-white lumps (with few spalling on surfaces); rare to frequent fine sparkling bits; rare to few fine rounded black grains; rare fine rounded and sub-rounded red pellets; few to frequent fine to small sub-rounded voids.

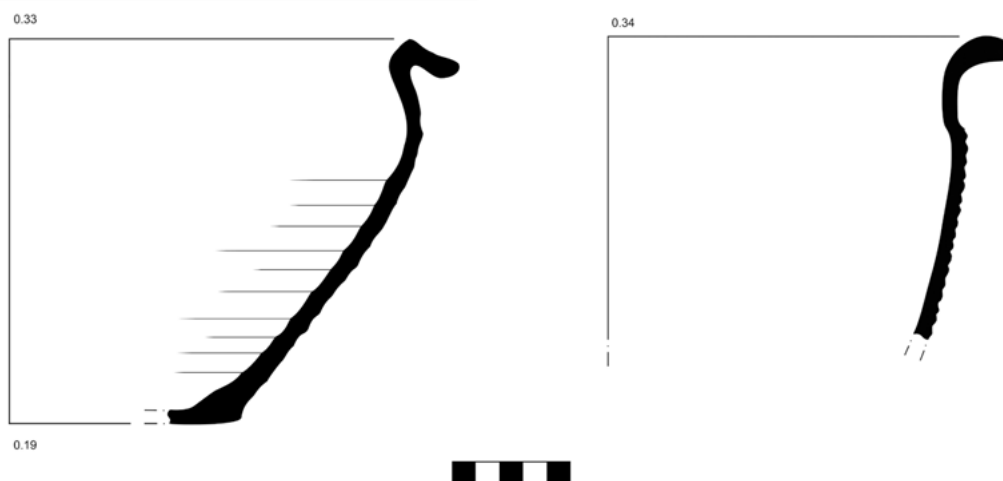


Fig. 1. Basins in southern Argolid fabric (04-02:7, left; 96-39:2, right). – Scale 1:3.

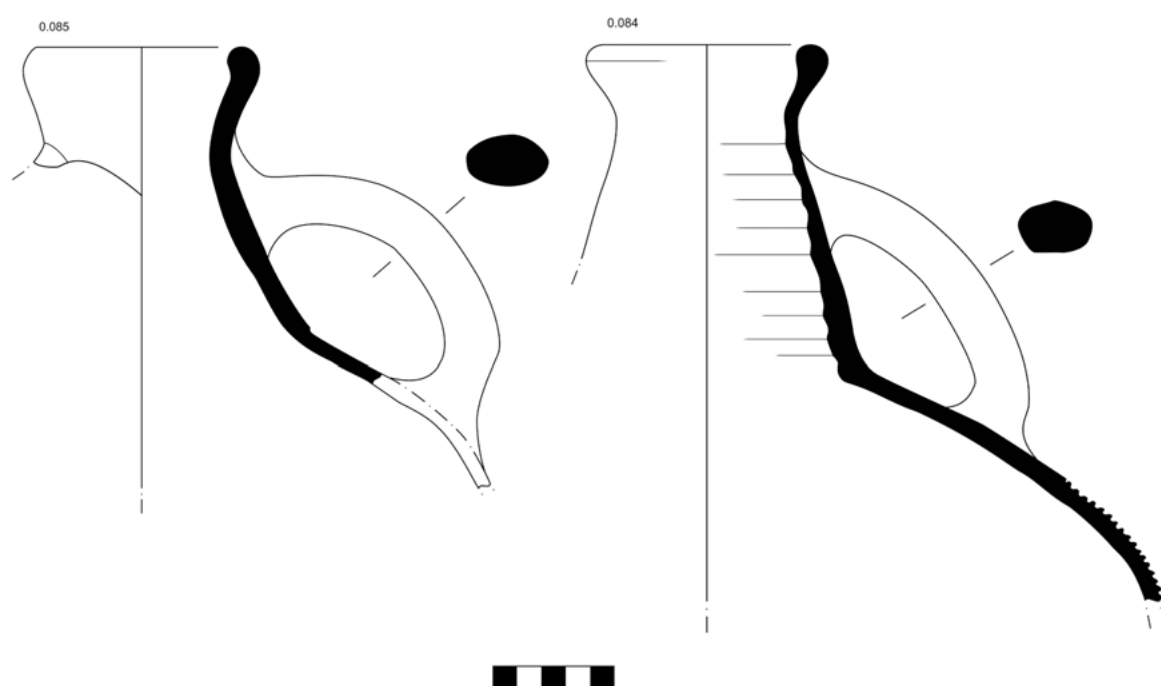


Fig. 2. Examples of LR Amphora 2 in southern Argolid fabric (97-57:51, left; 97-57:21, right). – Scale 1:3.

Late 4th- and early 5th-century deposits from the Panayia Field contain two distinct types of basins in southern Argolid fabric which are attested elsewhere in Corinth from at least the beginning of the 4th century (**fig. 1**).⁷ With the standardization of various amphora types throughout the eastern Mediterranean during the 5th century,⁸ this same fabric was used in the manufacture of the LR Amphora 2 which carried agricultural products to the far corners of the empire and beyond,⁹ with Corinth acting as a major node in its export

(**fig. 2**). Although examples with biconical necks and rims (**fig. 2**, left) tend to appear earlier here, amphorae with this profile as well as those with taller necks and shorter rims (**fig. 2**, right) are often found together, such as these two illustrated examples which were recovered from a large pit of the mid- to third quarter of the 7th century. It is significant that every example of the LR Amphora 2 recovered from the Panayia Field was manufactured in southern Argolid fabric with no other sources represented here.

⁷ SLANE 1994, 146 fig. 12 pl. 34,58–59. The evidence from the Panayia Field suggests that these shapes continued at least into the early years of the 5th century.

⁸ Illustrated by Riley's classification of Late Roman amphoras from Carthage; see RILEY 1981, 115–122.

⁹ For the distribution of the LR Amphora 2, see RILEY 1981, 122 fig. 15.

See also O. KARAGIORGOU, LR2: A Container for the Military Annona on the Danubian Border? In: S. Kingsley/M. Decker (eds.), *Economy and Exchange in the East Mediterranean during Late Antiquity*. Proceedings of a Conference at Somerville College, Oxford, 29th May, 1999 (Oxford 2001) 129–166.

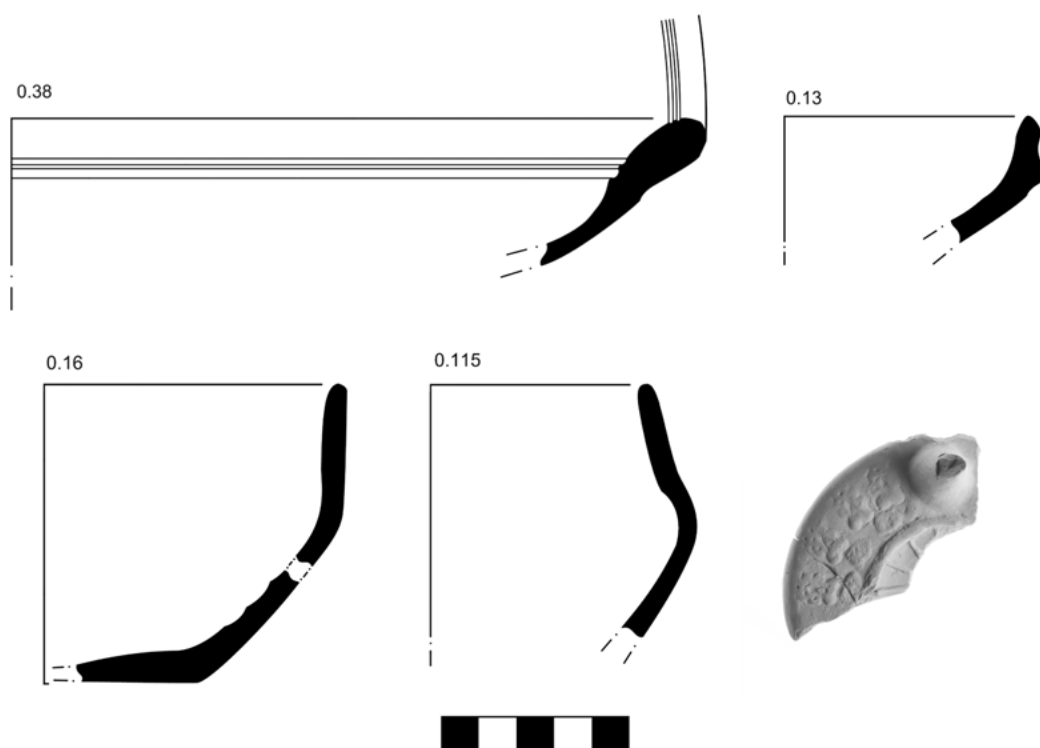


Fig. 3. Red-slipped shapes (C-1998-024, 95-61:62, top row), small bowls (95-61:40, 95-61:41, bottom left and centre), and lamp (95-61:92, bottom right) in southern Argolid fabric. – Scale 1:2.

Although the regional import of basins vanished as Corinth's local production of basins increased (see below), the city continued to consume other products from the southern Argolid in addition to the LR Amphora 2. Comparative study of published material and visits to regional collections suggest that the distribution of these products was more geographically limited than that of the amphorae. In the Panayia Field these include a very small number of red-slipped wares (**fig. 3**, top row), small bowls (**fig. 3**, bottom left and centre), and circular lamps (**fig. 3**, bottom right).¹⁰ Unlike the basins and LR Amphora 2, these other products were manufactured in a much-refined version of the same fabric, generally characterized by the same types of inclusions but in smaller size and quantity.¹¹ Therefore, potters in the southern Argolid, while maintaining their regionally-based markets with new products for distribution within the northeastern Peloponnese, were also able to significantly increase manufacture of a single product, the LR Amphora 2, in order to participate in long-distance markets.

The local manufacture of vessels in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric had existed since the 1st century.¹² This fabric, which fires to a variety of colours, is quite coarse and is characterized by the presence of bluish-gray chips of chert.¹³ By the late 4th century and continuing into the early 5th, only a modest number of vessels were manufactured in this fabric, limited to a handful of amphora, plain ware, and cooking ware shapes (**fig. 4**).¹⁴ Additional shapes were introduced through the 5th century, including cooking wares with everted rims and basins with folded rims (**fig. 5**). As production further increased throughout the 6th and early 7th centuries, vessels in this fabric supplied not only Corinth, but also neighboring sites in the surrounding region. Comparative studies have determined that this ware travelled intensively throughout the Late Roman northeastern Peloponnese, supplying sites

¹⁰ Imitations of North African lamps with a channel leading to the nozzle, as well as various types of small funerary lekythoi, have been noted from other areas of Corinth in southern Argolid fabric.

¹¹ With some variation, the refined version of the fabric is generally characterized by few to frequent very fine to fine elusive sparkling bits (in direct sunlight); rare to few fine sub-rounded calcareous white and off-white lumps (occasionally with rare spalling on the surface); rare to few fine rounded and sub-rounded black grains; few to frequent very fine to fine sub-rounded voids.

¹² Although the centre of manufacture has yet to be located, vessels in this fabric constituted the major locally-available ware in Late Roman Corinth. This fabric is the same as that discussed in SLANE 2014, and has been variously referred to over decades of scholarship as the understanding of its use and distribution have changed; see SLANE 1994 ("local cooking fabric" and "local cooking-fabric vessels [not for cooking]"); SANDERS 1999 ("Fabric F" and "Fabric G"); K. W. SLANE, *Corinth's Roman Pottery: Quantification and Meaning*. In: C. K. Williams II/N. Bookidis (eds.), *Corinth, The Centenary, 1896–1996*. Corinth 20 (Princeton 2003) 321–335 ("local [cooking] n.f.c [= not for cooking]"); SLANE/SANDERS 2005 ("Corinthian cooking fabric").

¹³ With some variation, the fabric is generally characterized by few to frequent small angular bluish-gray (or white/gray) chips (chert); few to frequent fine to small sub-rounded white lumps; few to frequent fine to small rounded sub-rounded voids.

¹⁴ The amphora is the same as an example published from the Athenian Agora; see H. S. ROBINSON, *Pottery of the Roman Period: Chronology*. Athenian Agora 5 (Princeton 1959) 115 pl. 32, M 325. Personal observation of this and other examples confirmed that the fabric is the same.

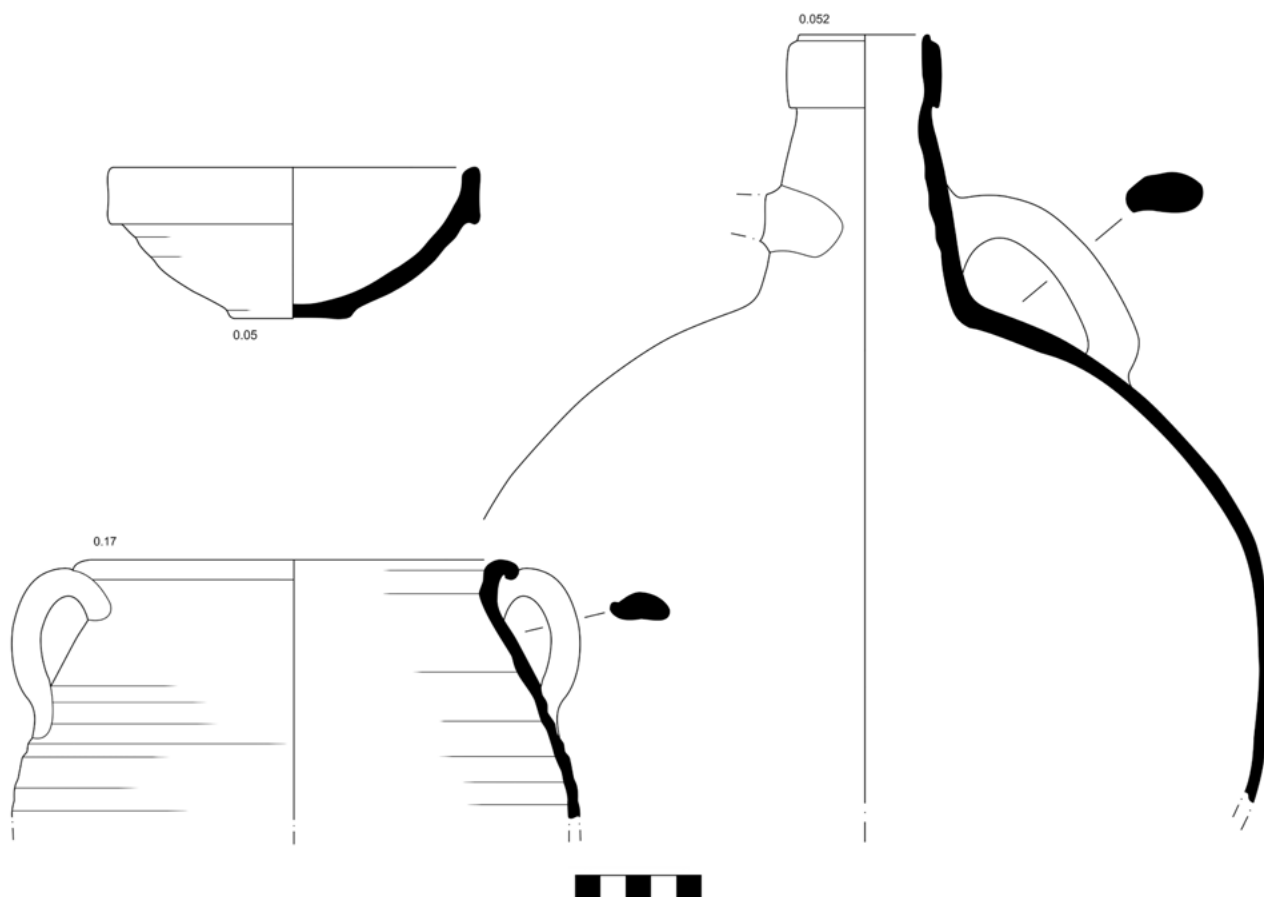


Fig. 4. Folded-rim bowl (04-52:8, top left), stewpot (00-07:28, bottom left), and amphora (04-06:1a, right) in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric. – Scale 1:3.

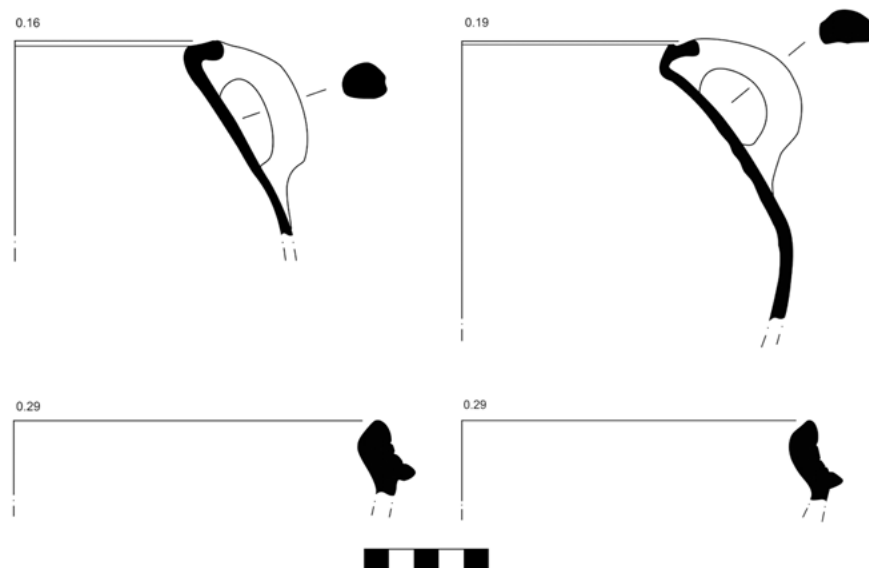


Fig. 5. Stewpots (01-11:14, 02-18:4, top row) and basins (96-45:70, 96-45:71, bottom row) in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric. – Scale 1:3.

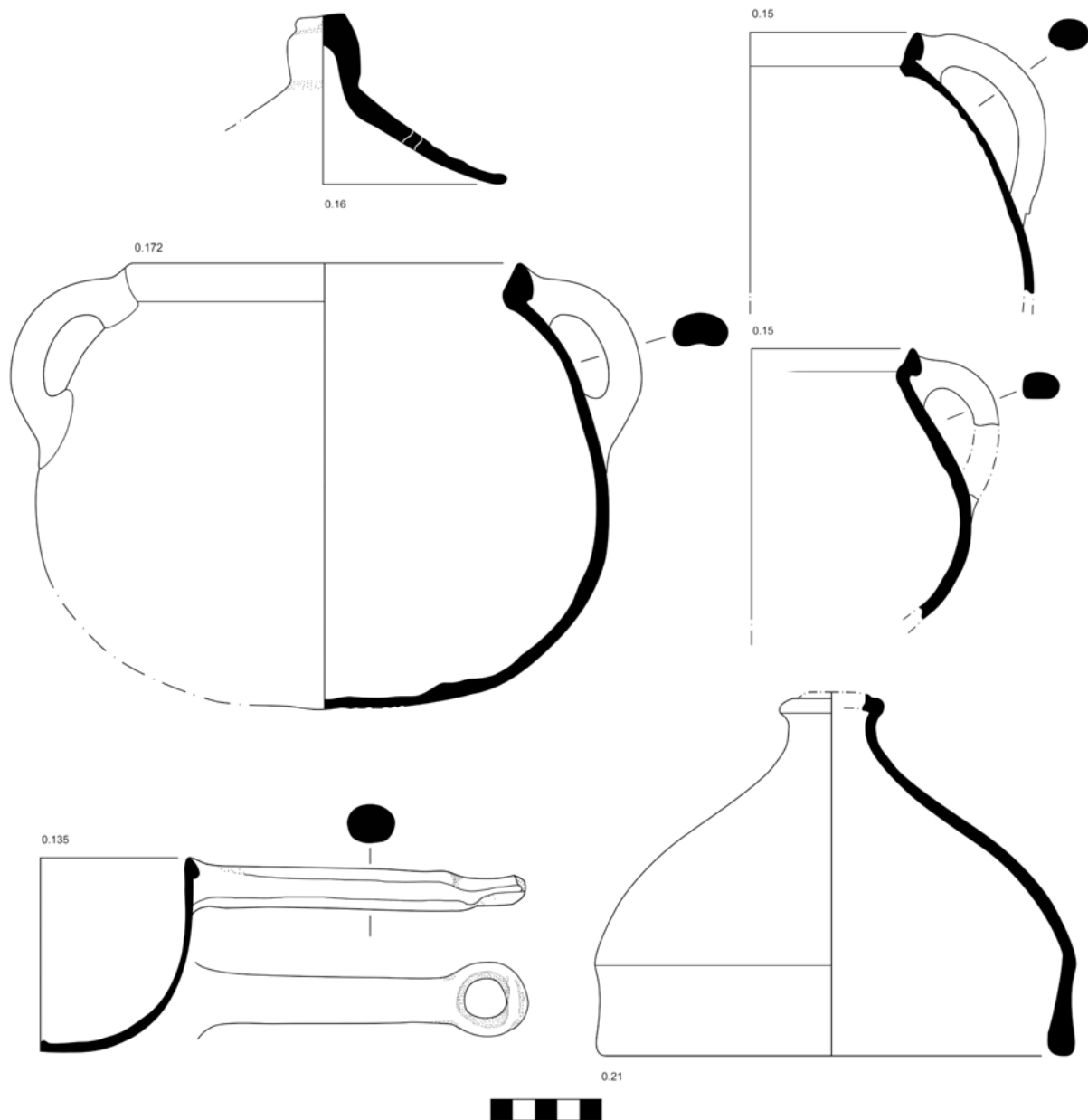


Fig. 6. Cooking wares in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric (98-29:a-b, 95-70:5, top row; 95-65:1, 98-24:6, middle row; 98-23:14, 00-21:1, bottom row). – Scale 1:3.

from Isthmia in the north to the farmstead at Pyrgouthi in the Berbati Valley in the south.¹⁵ The material recovered from the Panayia Field is particularly representative of the shapes of the mid-6th to early 7th century, and include not only a wide range of cooking wares (**fig. 6**), but also larger shapes such as amphorae and pitchers (**fig. 7**) and further-developed forms of the basin (**fig. 8**). The contents of the large pit dated to the mid- to third quarter of the 7th century revealed that many of

the same shapes continued in unbroken lines of development (**figs. 9–10**), but with new shapes, such as the wide-mouthed “fruit amphora,” also being introduced.¹⁶

One consequence of this expanding manufacture was that local forms in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric now replaced certain imports,¹⁷ such as basins from the southern Argolid (**fig. 1**) and cooking wares from various sources, but

¹⁵ The fabric of similar profiles published from a Late Roman context at Argos require physical confirmation; see P. AUPERT, *Objets de la vie quotidienne à Argos en 585 ap. J.-C.* In: *Études argiennes*. Bull. Corr. Hellénique Suppl. 6 (Athens 1980) 395–457. This ware evidently continued to enjoy a range of distribution similar to that of earlier centuries of Roman rule, although SLANE (2014, 96) was able to identify its presence at sites as far east as Epidauros during these earlier periods.

¹⁶ For an earlier discussion of the contents of this pit, see SLANE/SANDERS 2005, 273–280. Several examples of fruit amphorae in this fabric were recovered from this pit, including one example in southern Argolid fabric; see SLANE/SANDERS 2005, 276 fig. 13,4–16, for an example in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric.

¹⁷ Another local ware, not discussed here, utilized a lime-rich, brick-red fabric dubbed here as “LR Corinthian lamp fabric” primarily in the production of lamps which ultimately replaced those imported from Athens during the course of the 5th c. and continued into the early 7th c.

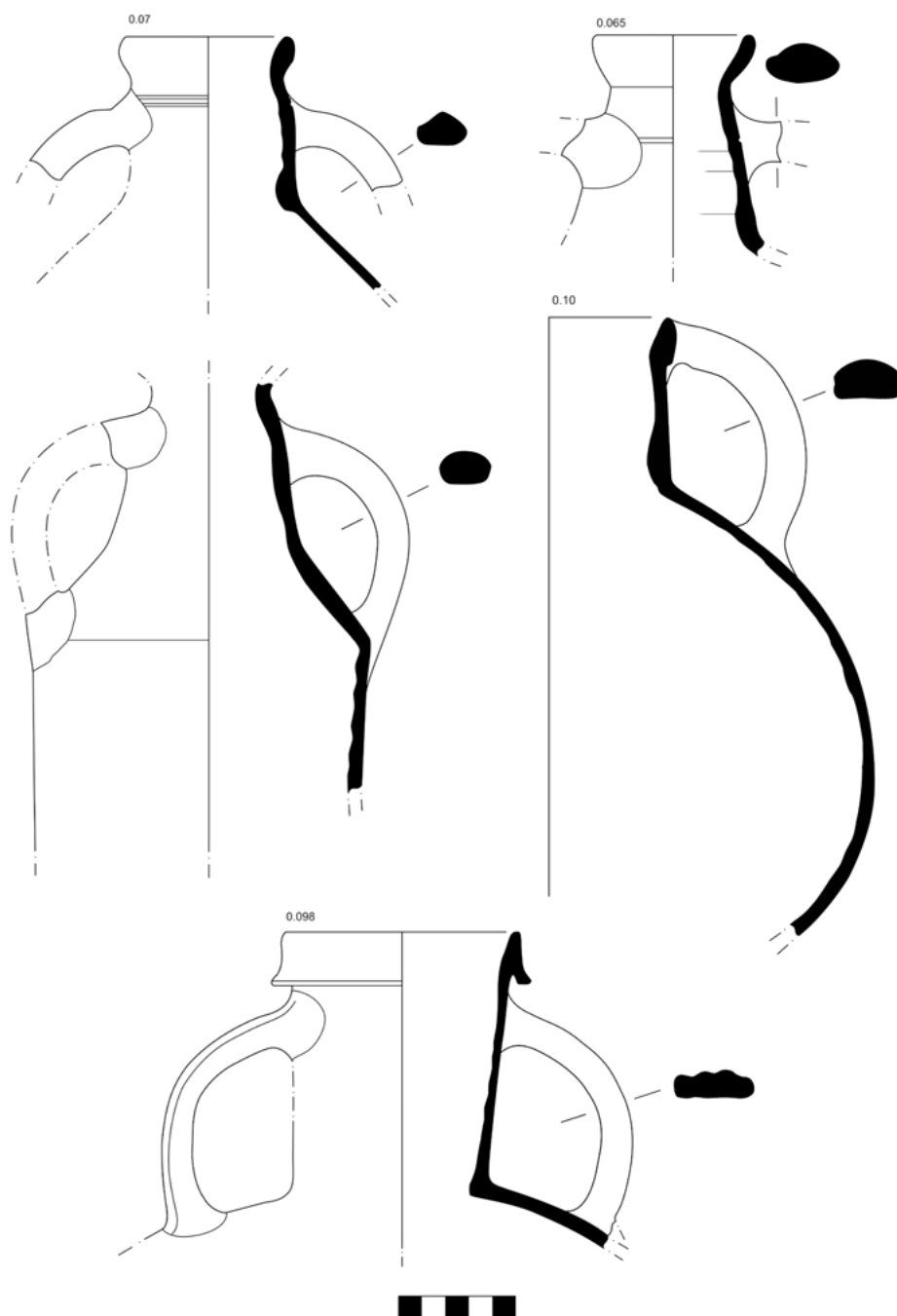


Fig. 7. Amphorae (01-09:16, 02-06:27, top row; 99-38:14, centre left) and pitchers (98-23:12, centre right; 01-10:12, bottom) in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric. – Scale 1:3.

most notably “Late Roman micaceous Aegean ware.”¹⁸ The presence of imports is often used as a measure of economic prosperity, thereby implying that reliance on local production must be interpreted as a sign of economic stagnation. This is not the case here, as associated finds (mainly imported fine

wares and amphorae) attest to Corinth’s continued access to long-distance markets during this time. Moreover, the standardization noted in both the fabric and the forms of these high-quality products could only have been the result of manufacture that operated within the model of a nucleated workshop, which D. P. S. Peacock characterized as being associated with a very complex and sophisticated infrastructure.¹⁹ Therefore, the local expansion of wares manufactured

¹⁸ For a discussion of Late Roman micaceous Aegean ware, see SLANE/SANDERS 2005, 287. See also K. W. SLANE/E. KIRIATZI, Kythera ‘al fresco’: Middle and Late Roman Cooking Pots from the Aegean Region. In: N. Poulou-Papademetriou/E. Nodarou/V. Kilikoglou (eds.), LRCW 4. Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean: Archaeology and Archaeometry. The Mediterranean: A Market Without Frontiers. BAR Internat. Ser. 2616 (Oxford 2014) 910.

¹⁹ D. P. S. PEACOCK. Pottery in the Roman World: An Ethnoarchaeological Approach (London 1982) 9; 38–43. – SLANE 2014, 96 came to the same conclusion.

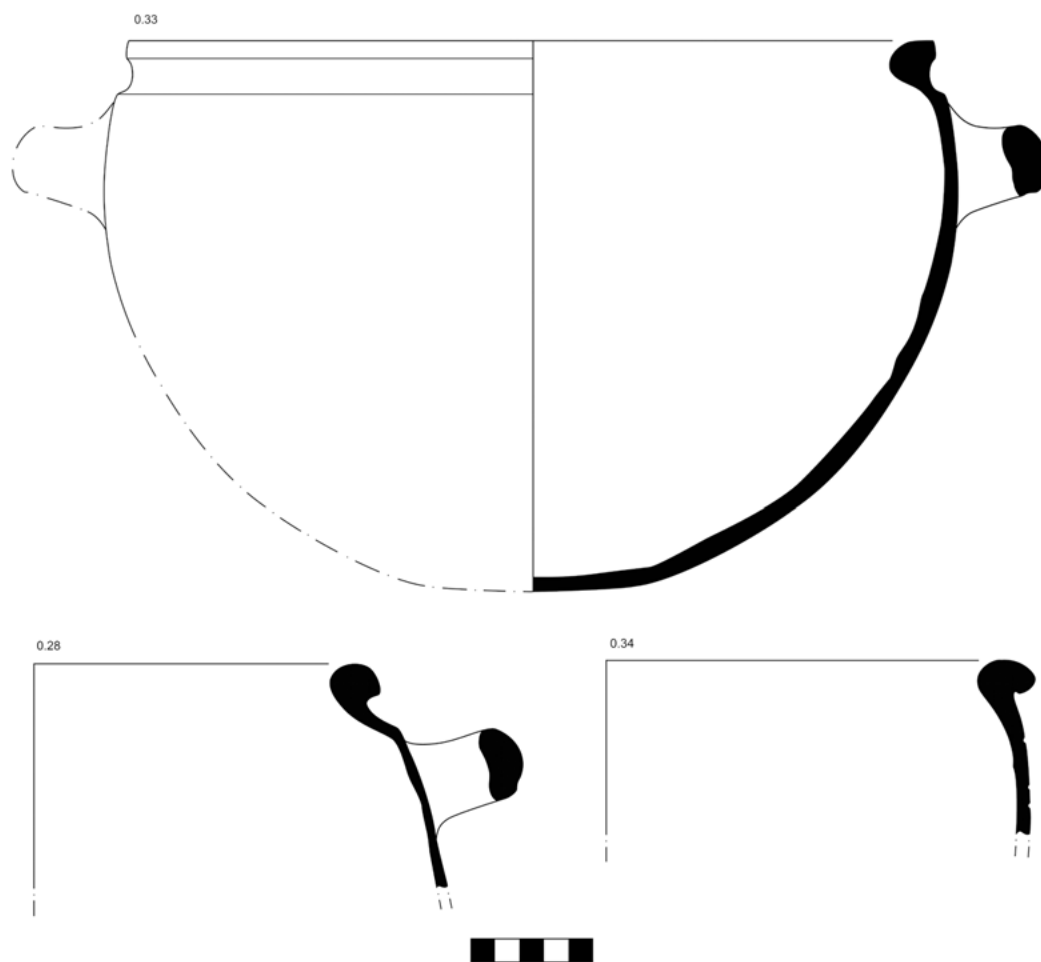


Fig. 8. Basins (98-23:7, top; 95-61:3, 95-61:4, bottom) in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric. – Scale 1:3.

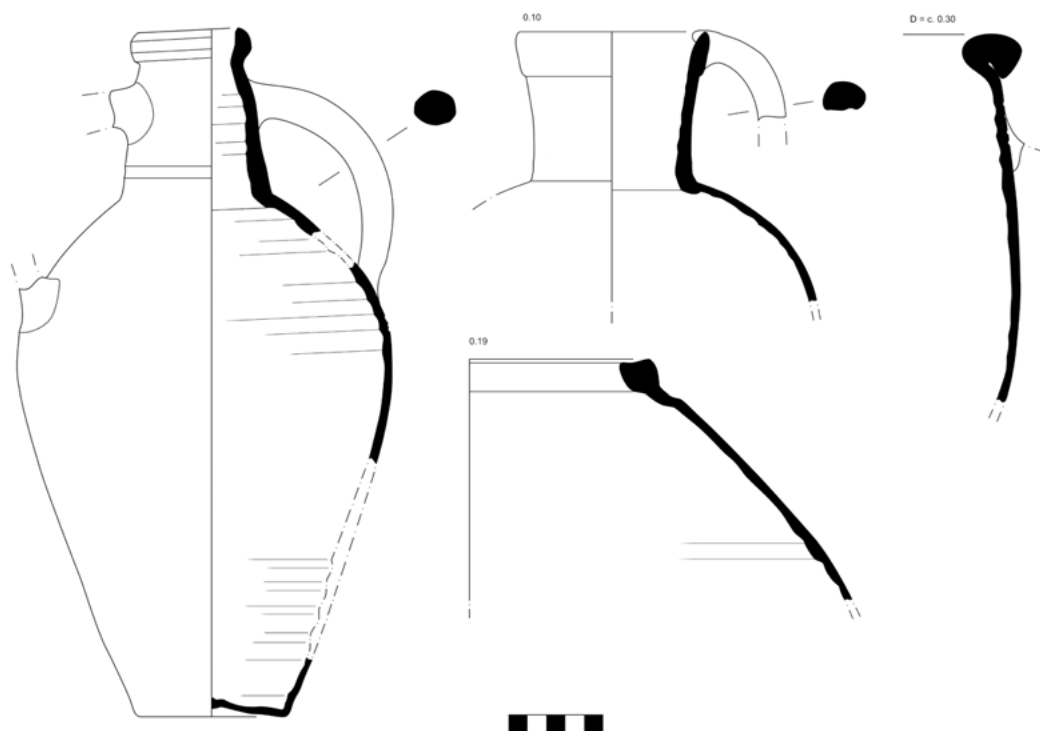


Fig. 9. Amphora (C-1997-050, left), pitcher (97-57:13, top centre), basin (97-57:42a), and “bin” (small pithos?) (97-57:15, bottom centre) in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric. – Scale 1:4.

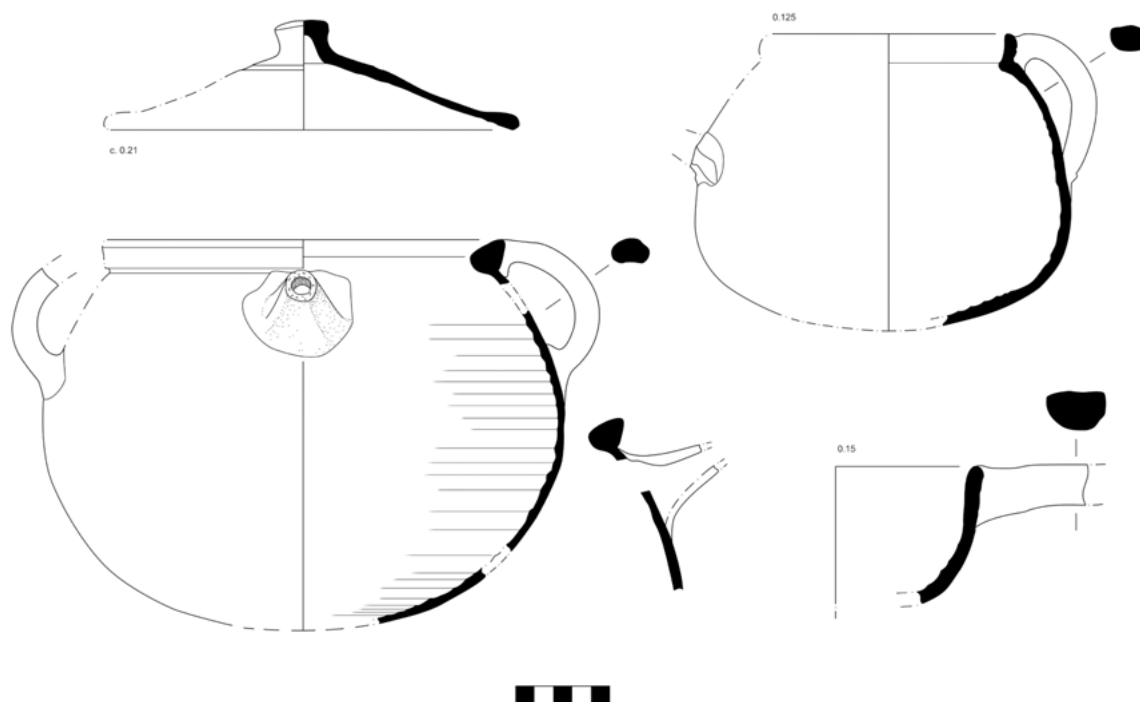


Fig. 10. Cooking wares in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric (97-57:16, 97-57:11, top row; C-1997-053, C-1997-055, bottom row). – Scale 1:3.

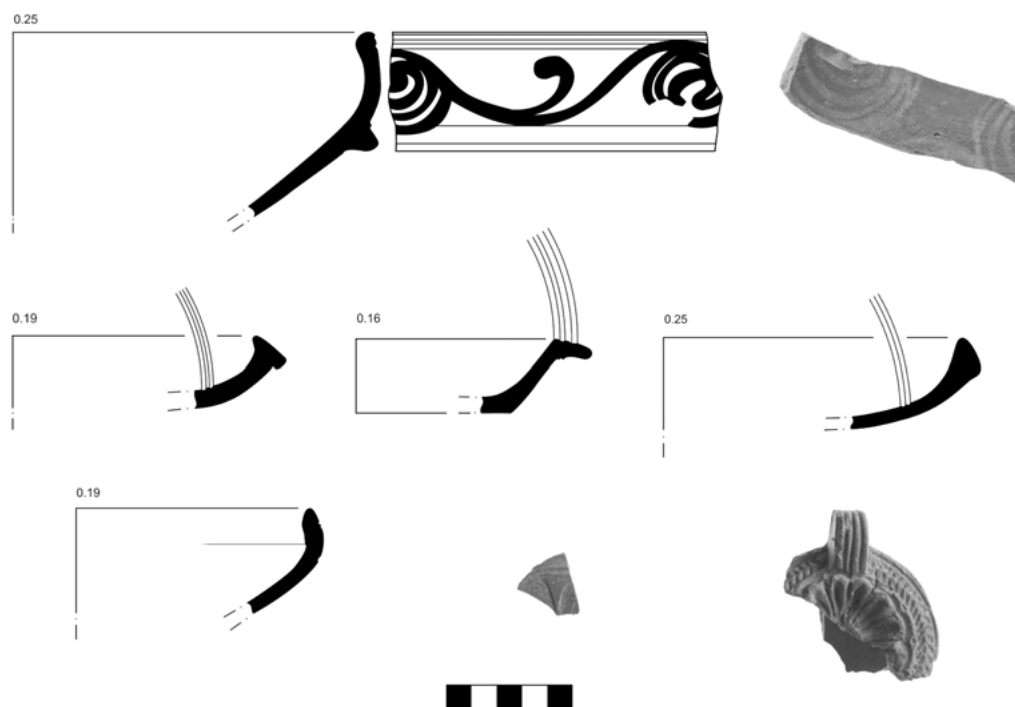


Fig. 11. Red-slipped bowls with white-painted decoration (96-45:28, 96-40:2, top row), red-slipped bowls (02-06:1, 00-07:9, 01-11:3, middle row; 98-15:6, bottom left), stamped fragment (99-08:2, bottom centre), and lamp (L-1996-002, bottom right) in Attic fabric. – Scale 1:3.

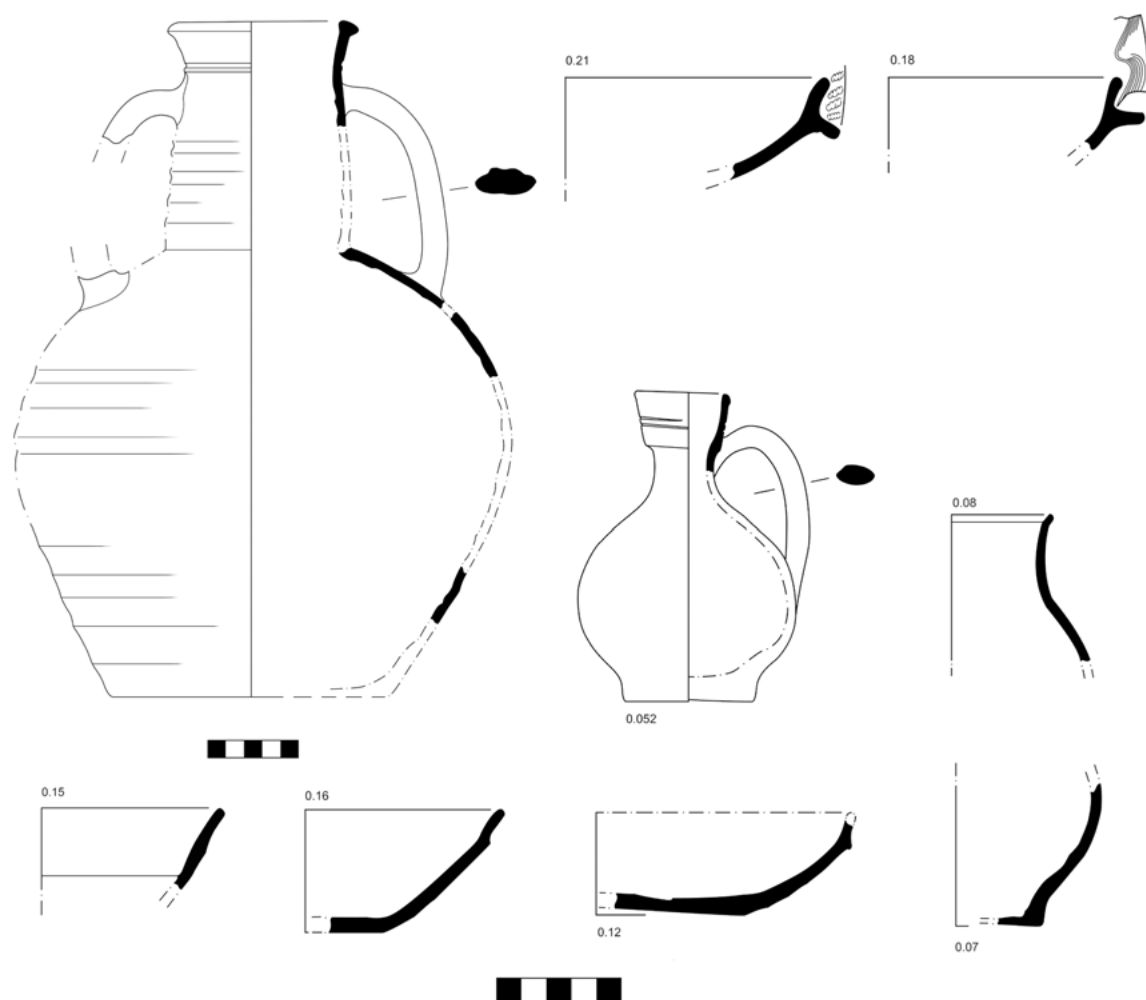


Fig. 12. Amphora (C-1997-051, top left), flanged bowls (01-09:13, 01-09:14, top centre and right), lekythos (C-1998-018, centre), mugs (95-61:57, middle right; 99-30:3, bottom right), and bowls with vertical rims (98-15:8, 95-61:30, 95-61:31, bottom left) in Boiotian fabric. – Scale 1:3 except amphora (scale 1:4).

in Northeast Peloponnesian cooking fabric is here interpreted as a deliberate economic strategy that actively favoured local production over regional or long-distance imports.

Finally, despite geographic proximity, the supply of ceramics to Corinth from immediately neighbouring regions such as Attica and Boiotia may have been dependent to some degree on long-distance distribution routes, specifically those connected with North Africa. Corinth had been supplied with Attic lamps and red-slipped wares for some time, and their import continued into the late 4th and 5th century (fig. 11). This slightly micaceous fabric shows a degree of macroscopic variability, but was petrographically found to be homogeneous, with the lamps utilizing a refined version of the fabric used in fine wares.²⁰ Differences in firing can make the slip appear either red or almost metallic purple in

colour, while the fabric is often noted to be red (10R 5/8 to 2.5YR 5/8) to light red (2.5YR 6/8) or reddish yellow (5YR 6/6 to 7.5YR 6/6) and darker. Athenian imports to Corinth seem to decrease sometime during the second half of the 5th century and any Attic wares appearing after ca. 500 in the Panayia Field are certainly residual.

This break in supply coincides suggestively with the disruption in African Red Slip Ware (AfRS) at about this time.²¹ Despite the decrease of both AfRS and Attic wares at Corinth, red-slipped fine ware bowls and other shapes manufactured in nearby Boiotia, perhaps at Askra, were not

²⁰ Very generally speaking, the fabric as it appears in 5th-century contexts is characterized by few to frequent fine sparkling bits; few fine rounded and sub-rounded dark/black grains; rare to frequent fine to small sub-rounded white lumps; rare fine rounded red pellets; few to frequent fine to small sub-rounded voids.

²¹ Although the final Vandal conquest of Carthage in 439 offers a convenient explanation, recent arguments tend to see the decrease in AfRS as a symptom of the empire's division into eastern and western halves and the associated political and administrative changes that took place; see J. W. HAYES, *Late Hellenistic and Roman Pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean – An Overview of Recent Developments*. In: M. B. Briese/L. E. Vaag (eds.), *Trade Relations in the Eastern Mediterranean from the Late Hellenistic Period to Late Antiquity: The Ceramic Evidence*. Acts from a Ph.D.-Seminar for Young Scholars, Sandbjerg Manorhouse, 12–15 February 1998. *Halicarnassian Stud.* 3 (Odense 2005) 12. See also J. W. HAYES, *Roman Pottery: Fine-Ware Imports*. *Athenian Agora* 32 (Princeton 2008) 72.

immediately imported to satisfy new demand (**Fig. 12**).²² This very fine fabric made petrographic analysis difficult, but macroscopic study of the fabric of the various vessels discussed here strongly suggests that they share the same raw materials.²³ The evidence from the Panayia Field clearly shows that Boiotian wares only appear in significant quantity after the return of AfRS (following the re-conquest of Africa in 533), and in addition to the already-present LRC fine wares from Asia Minor.²⁴ In other words, Boiotian wares were not shipped across the Corinthian Gulf in order to fill a break in supply, but rather appear only when a variety of networks were already supplying Corinth. Thus it appears that geographic proximity alone was not enough to stimulate distribution between neighbouring regions, with Corinth's import of ceramics from regional centres in Attica and Boiotia seemingly facilitated by the presence of long-distance routes with Africa.

Corinth's situation along the major routes of the Late Roman Empire ensured that it played a significant role in the consumption and distribution of ceramics from throughout

the Mediterranean. But in addition to imports from distant sources the city enjoyed many products from regional and local centres, as identified and characterized among the finds recovered from the Panayia Field. Local manufacturers were able to expand into regional markets, and regional centres produced vessels that were distributed to the limits of the empire, in both cases changing the character of the imported goods consumed at, and travelling through, Corinth. But the opposite was also true, with the presence or absence of pan-Mediterranean routes determining how Corinth would interact with its nearest regional neighbours. The various case studies presented here illustrate how an understanding of production and distribution at the local, regional, and long-distance levels can significantly aid in the comprehension of the total ceramic profile of a site, as changes at one level may have had significant consequences for another.

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²² The identification of Askra in Boiotia as the centre of production is based upon published reports of wasters found corresponding to the bowls with vertical rims; see J. VROOM, *After Antiquity: Ceramics and Society in the Aegean from the 7th to the 20th Century A.C. A Case Study from Boeotia, Central Greece*. Arch. Stud. Leiden Univ. 10 (Leiden 2003) 137–139.

²³ With some variation, the fabric is generally characterized by few fine sparkling bits; few very fine to fine sub-rounded white lumps; rare to few fine rounded black grains; few to frequent very fine to fine sub-rounded voids. Subtle differences in the fabric of the flanged bowls (**Fig. 12**, top right) might argue for a different, but likely nearby, source. Due to the inconclusive results of the petrographic analysis, chemical analyses should be undertaken in the future to confirm the homogeneity of this ware.

²⁴ Although appearing in significant quantity only after the mid-6th century, isolated examples of Boiotian products do appear sporadically in earlier deposits.

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