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EARLY BYZANTINE POTTERY WORKSHOPS IN OLYMPIA

Between 1987 and 1991, excavations of the German Archaeological Institute in Olympia under the direction of Ulrich Sinn uncovered north of the Prytaneion a building complex with architectural phases from the Hellenistic to the Early Byzantine period.¹ In Hellenistic and Roman Imperial times, it contributed to the infrastructure of the Panhellenic sanctuary, with possibly multifunctional rooms around a court at first and a Roman peristyle with elaborate mosaic pavements, later. From Hellenistic times on, the building also comprised bathing facilities. The initial Hellenistic circular bath was replaced at different stages with a Roman water basin and an annex with Roman *thermae*. The Christian inhabitants of the Early Byzantine settlement reused the then semi-destroyed building. Profiting from the water supply and drainage systems that were still in function, they largely adopted it for workshop activities.

Thus, in the 5th century AD, a pottery kiln (**fig 1,1.3.4**) was installed in the former *tepidarium*. In the same period, three connecting basins (**fig. 1,1.2.4**) north of the Roman peristyle court were in use. The stratigraphy and the associated pottery finds suggest that they should be attributed to the pottery workshop, serving the refinement of the clay.²

The kiln, when abandoned, was covered with a thick stratum containing debris of misfired vessels and vessel stands, obviously discarded products from the final phase of the workshop³. Similar wasters were found in and around the basins, attesting to their abandonment approximately at the same time.

According to the wasters, the pottery workshop in its last phase mainly produced the following shapes: tall one-handled storage jugs (**fig. 2**), round-bellied jugs (**fig. 4**), cooking pots (**fig. 5**), stands for storage vessels (**fig. 3**), and a variety of steep and shallow *kalathoi* or *lekanai* (**fig. 4**). The household vessels are of relatively hard-fired clay with characteristic semi-slip or painted decoration. The tall jugs, the round-bellied jug K 10552 and the *kalathoi* are decorated with thick vertical streaks in reddish or brown slip. On the *kalathoi*, radial streaks on the rim are added. The *lekane* K 4500 bears decoration of painted streaks both on the inner and the outer walls and an incised palm-branch design with a decorative pie-crust lining on the rim.

The shapes and the decoration of the household vessels from the kiln follow the general tendencies of the period; our finds are related to vessels from Group M, Layer XI, from the Athenian Agora⁴, dated to the late 5th century, from

Delphi⁵, Argos⁶, and from Eretria⁷. The stands are paralleled by examples from Crete.⁸ The cooking pots imitate an im-

¹ Preliminary annual reports on the excavations 1987–1991 and 2002/2003 by U. Sinn were published in Arch. Anz.; Arch. Reports; Bull. Corr. Hellénique. – H. KYRIELEIS, Bericht über die Arbeiten in Olympia in den Jahren 1982–1999. In: H. Kyrieleis, XII. Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia (Berlin 2003) 7–18 passim. – Cf. CH. SCHAUER, Kaiserzeitliche Keramik der Westpeloponnes. RCRF Acta 38, 2003, 271–278; EAD., Das neugefundene hellenistische Bad in Olympia. RCRF Acta 40, 2008, 227 footnote 1.

Figures: Fig. 1,1 taken from the new general map of Olympia by the German Archaeological Institute, edited by K. Herrmann, see K. HERRMANN in: H. Kyrieleis (ed.), Olympia 1875–2000. 125 Jahre Deutsche Ausgrabungen (Mainz 2002) 127. – Fig. 1,2: photograph by I. Geske, from: Archaeological Reports 1989–1990 (London 1990) 31 fig. 22. – Fig. 1,3: photograph by Ch. Schauer. – Fig. 1,4 plan by S. Hutzler, B. Peschke and S. Ruhe. – Figs. 2–6: photographs by E. F. Gehnen and A. Tzimas; ink drawings by B. Greiner based on original drawings by Ch. Schauer. – Copyright for all figures: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. – I thank the Austrian Archaeological Institute for granting me special leave in order to participate in the congress.

² The possibility remains that there are other contemporary kilns to be discovered in the area, as suggested by colleagues in discussion during the poster presentation, considering the relatively large size of the basins as compared to the small size of the excavated kiln.

³ Cf. SCHAUER 2002.

⁴ For the tall jugs see ROBINSON 1959, 113; 116 no. M 315. M 336 pl. 33 from Layers XI and XII. For the round-bellied jug see ROBINSON 1959, 117–118 no. M 362. M 365 from Layer XIII (late 6th cent.).

⁵ P. PÉTRIDIS, Delphes dans l'antiquité tardive. Première approche topographique et céramologique. Bull. Corr. Hellénique 121, 1997, 681–695.

⁶ M. PIÉART/J.-P. THALMANN, Céramique romaine et médiévale. In: Études argiennes 464 group A, see nos. A 15. A 16. A 18; A 26 fig. 4 pls. 2–3. The vessels come from the lowest stratum of a well in Argos. As already stated by the authors, some of the vessel types from group A continue after the suggested date of late 4th/early 5th cent. for this group. This is certainly so for the amphora A 7 (Carthage LRA 3) fig. 3 pl. 2 as two-handled examples of the type just begin to circulate at this point and continue until around 600 AD, cf. for example D. P. S. PEACOCK/D. F. WILLIAMS, Amphorae and the Roman economy. An introductory guide (London, New York 1986) 188–190 Class 45, and could be true for other types, too.

⁷ It is still difficult to establish an exact chronological frame for the local pottery. Shapes seem to have developed little in Late antiquity, though within general tendencies. P. THEMELIS, Ανασκαφή Ερέτριας, Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 1975, 40–41 pls. 18 β. 19. 25 α, in his preliminary presentation of the finds correlates the destruction of the pottery workshop with an earthquake in 365 AD. – Generally, recent research seems to establish lower dates than previously suggested, see K. W. SLANE, The end of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth. Hesperia 2008, 465–496.

⁸ Cf. ST. MARKOULAKI, Οι όρες και οι Εποχές σε ψηφιδωτό από το Καστέλι Κισιάμου. Κρητική Εστία 4/1, 1987, 43 fig. 1 pl. 12 δ. – Ch. VOGT, Πρωτοβυζαντινή κεραμική από την Αγία Γαλήνη.

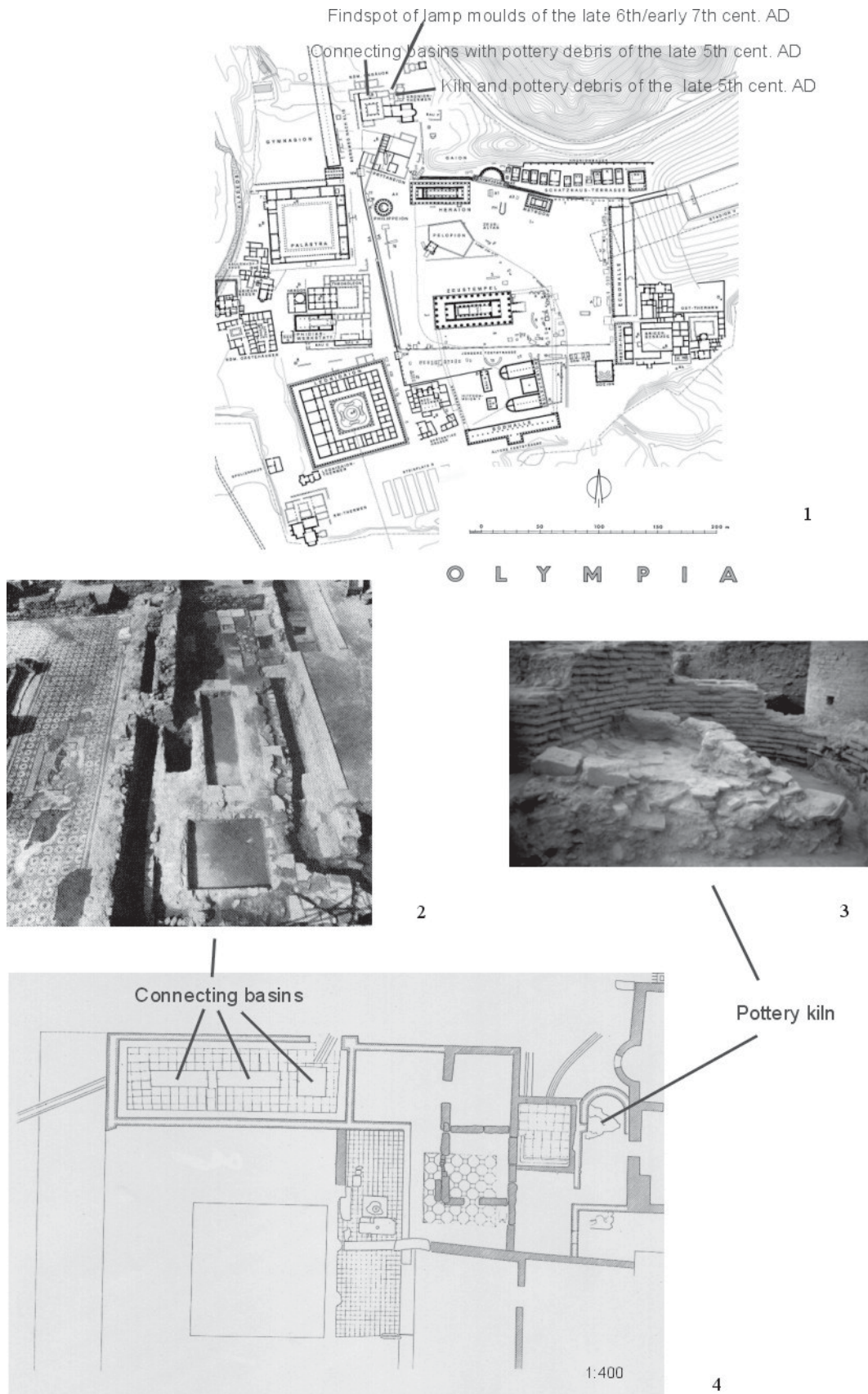


Fig. 1. Olympia. Workshop installations of the Early Byzantine period in the Roman building north of the Prytaneion.

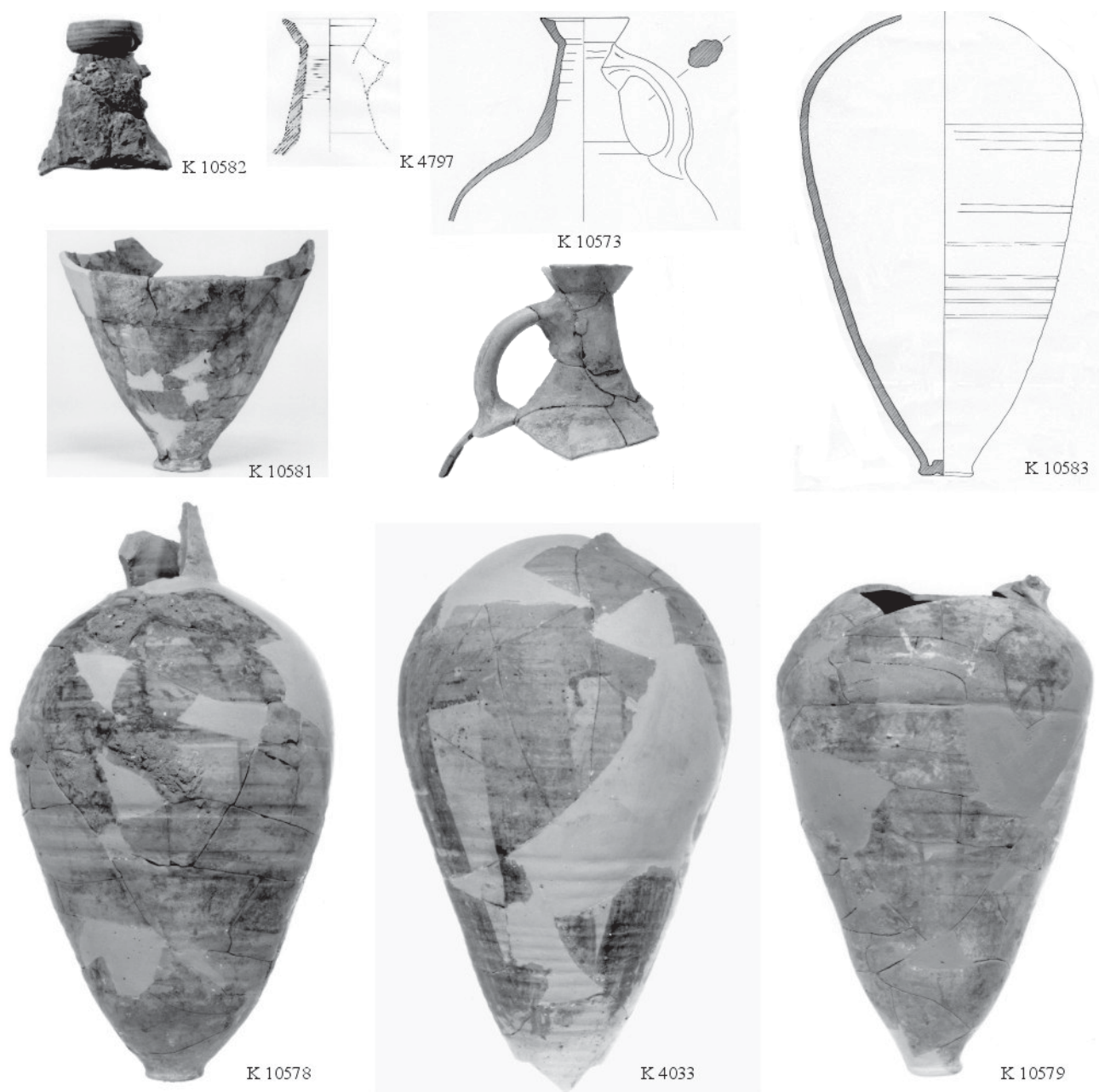


Fig. 2. Olympia. Storage jugs from the debris of the late 5th century AD pottery workshop. – Scale ca. 1:6.

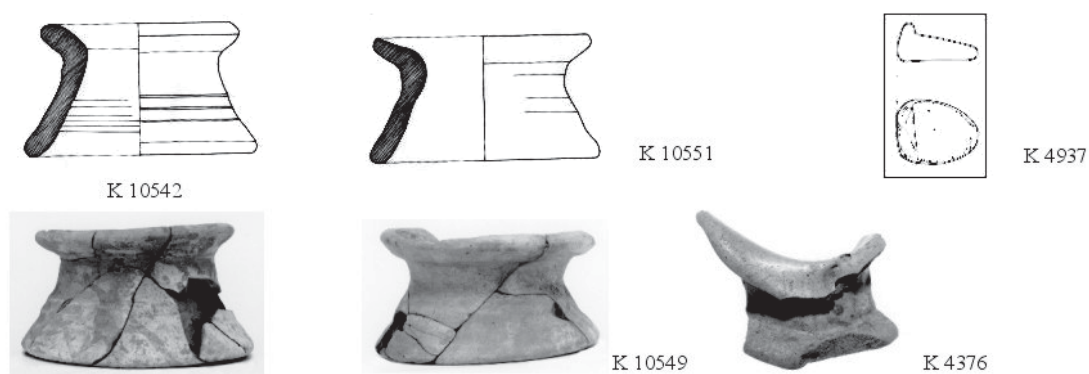


Fig. 3. Olympia. Stands and kiln support from the debris of the late 5th century AD pottery workshop. – Scale ca. 1:6.

ported, probably Aegean prototype with plenty of mica, present in Olympia in a nearly complete pot and a fragment.⁹ Two shoulder fragments of Late Roman 2 amphorae dated to the 5th and 6th centuries found with the debris of the pottery workshop give a further indication as to the date of the deposit.

Though imports of Late Roman C ware, African red-slip ware and amphorae are present in 5th century AD contexts from Olympia¹⁰, the percentage of locally produced vessels for household purposes seems to be extremely high. The discovery of the kiln and the associated 5th century pottery debris provide us with a distinctive group of locally produced household vessels of different types. From this starting point, many of the ceramic finds from contemporary contexts in Olympia can be identified as belonging to the same local production.

In the Early Byzantine settlement of Olympia, there is ample evidence for viniculture, as numerous wine presses have been found during the old excavation throughout the settlement. From his reconstruction and study of an Early Byzantine house with an elaborate wine press between the Palaistra and the Gymnasium, discovered in 1878 during the old excavations in Olympia¹¹, Völling concluded that production of and trade with wine was among the main occupations of the inhabitants of Early Byzantine Olympia. He then suggested to me the possibility that the tall jars in the waste material from the pottery workshop were intended as containers for the local wine.

The Early Byzantine settlement could certainly rely on its local products to a large extent. There are plows and axes associated with agriculture or horticulture.¹² There were also mill stones that prove corn-growing. In our excavation north of the Prytaneion, wasters from a workshop of a blacksmith and semi-finished products of a workshop for bone tools have been found. To this list I would like to add some of the Early Byzantine glass vessels and glass lamps that seem to be made from recycled older material. However, there are imports of fine wares and amphorae that prove the availability of African and Aegean oil, wine, and possibly other goods. In fact, in his study of the agricultural instruments from the Early Byzantine settlement, Völling noted the absence of tools connected with the production of olive oil.

The tendency towards local production is intensified during the second phase of the Christian settlement into the early 7th century, when luxury items such as sigillata plates are missing altogether, maybe except for an odd piece. Local vessels still are slip-coated and painted in a similar way, but tend to be stout and flat-bottomed or have a hollowed base with a central button. The fabric is generally very coarse containing many sandy inclusions.¹³ The characteristic decoration includes combed patterns, either continuous straight or wavy incised lines or short lines in decorative groups.

Terracotta lamps were also produced on the spot. From several terracotta moulds for lamps of the »African type« found in earlier excavations, we know that the type was imitated by local potters, probably in the later fifth and in the sixth centuries when imports of African red-slip lamps decreased. There was also evidence from older excavations for local production of lamps with circular outline and conic

handle¹⁴, the latest lamp type present in the settlement, derived from the African type.

In our excavation north of the Prytaneion a variety of moulds and lamps of this type were found. Three well-preserved moulds¹⁵, a mould fragment, and several lamps and lamp fragments (**fig. 6**) of this type came to light; they attest to another ceramic workshop in the immediate vicinity, active in the late 6th or early 7th century, the second phase of the Christian settlement of Olympia.

The moulds were found close together in the area between the pottery workshop installations of the 5th century, but belong to a later stratum. The associated kiln has not been found.

In Broneer's publication of the terracotta lamps from Corinth, in 1930, the round lamps are classified as »type 32« or »Sicilian« lamps, as the first published examples were found in Syracuse. More recent finds demonstrate however that the type was distributed widely in the Peloponnese, Attica and the southern part of the Greek mainland¹⁶. As to

Κρητική Εστία 4/4, 1989–1991, 70–72 fig. 17 pl. 6; I thank Dr. Kleanthis Sidiropoulos for bringing these pieces to my attention. – Cf. also W. RUDOLPH, Excavations at Porto Cheli and vicinity, preliminary Report V. The Early Byzantine remains. *Hesperia* 48, 1979, 309–310 nos. 14–16 fig. 6.

⁹ See K. W. SLANE, East-west trade in fine wares and commodities: The view from Corinth, *RCRF Acta* 36, 2000, 309 with fig. 12. – For the well-preserved specimen from Olympia (K 1009) see SCHILBACH 1999, 150–151 pls. 40, 1 and 41, 3.

¹⁰ See A. MARTIN, Fine Wares from Olympia. *RCRF Acta* 35, 1997, 211–216. – For an analysis of a 6th cent. context cf. *id.*, Two Roman contexts from Olympia. *RCRF Acta* 33, 1996, 127–134.

¹¹ See TH. VÖLLING, »Neuer Most aus alten Löwenköpfen«. Ein frühbyzantinisches Gemach der alten Grabung in Olympia. *Mitt. DAI, Abt. Athen* 111, 1996, 391–410.

¹² *Id.*, Early Byzantine agricultural implements from Olympia (5th/6th centuries AD). In: Themelis/Konti 2002, 195–207.

¹³ For examples, see TH. VÖLLING, Ein frühbyzantinischer Hortfund aus Olympia. *Mitt. DAI, Abt. Athen* 110, 1995, 425–459 pls. 93–97. – SCHILBACH 1999, 146–151 pls. 39–41.

¹⁴ There are a mould for round lamps (K 4247) and several round lamps with various decorations from the excavations of the 1960s in the southeast area of Olympia; they have not yet been published.

¹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the decoration, cf. SCHAUER 1991.

¹⁶ For specimens see P. ORSI, *Notizie degli Scavi* 1909, 355–363 with figs. 18, 21 (from Syracuse). – BRONEER 1930, 120–121; 290–291 nos. 1501–1510 pl. 33. – C. ROEBUCK, The Asklepieion and Lerna. *Corinth XIV* (Princeton 1951) 164 pl. 57, 1 no. CL 3092. – PERLZWEIG 1961, 100 nos. 340–341 pl. 10 (imported lamps, with African stamp motives) and 193 nos. 2832–2837 pl. 44, 50 (Athenian imitations). – P. LAZARIDIS, Ανασκαφαί Νέας Αγχιάλου. Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 1965, 16 pls. 9 â. 10 â. – A. BOVON, Lampes d'Argos, *Études Péloponnésiennes V* (Paris 1966) nos. 657–668 pls. 17–18 (lists the round lamps with the African type). – P. AUPERT, Objets de la vie quotidienne à Argos en 585 ap. J.-C. In: *Études argiennes* 412–415 nos. 58–80 figs. 26–34. – A. OIKONOMOU, Παλαιοχριστιανικά λυχνάρια από τη Σπάρτη. *Λακωνικά Σπουδαί* 9, 1988, 289–290 no. 17 fig. 15. – PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI 2002, 300 no. 324 (from Nea Anchialos). – A. OIKONOMOU-LANIADO, Argos paléochrétienne. Contribution à l'étude du Péloponnèse Byzantin. *BAR Internat. Ser.* 1173 (Oxford 2003) 44; 46; 50. – For more published examples see SCHAUER 1991, 376 footnotes 11 and 12. – A lamp from Elis was published by CH. ROGL, Öllampen aus der Stadt Elis. *Jahresh. ÖAI* 65, 1996, Beibl. cols. 162–178 no. L 76 figs. 6 a–b pl. 2. – I do not think that there was only one lamp workshop supplying the area of Elis with round lamps. As is certainly the case for the lamps imitating the »African« type Broneer 31, there may have been several local workshops producing type 32. – I wish to thank Dr. Michalis Petropoulos and Dr. Giorgos Zachos for informing me that the type is present in Patras and in Lamia, respectively.

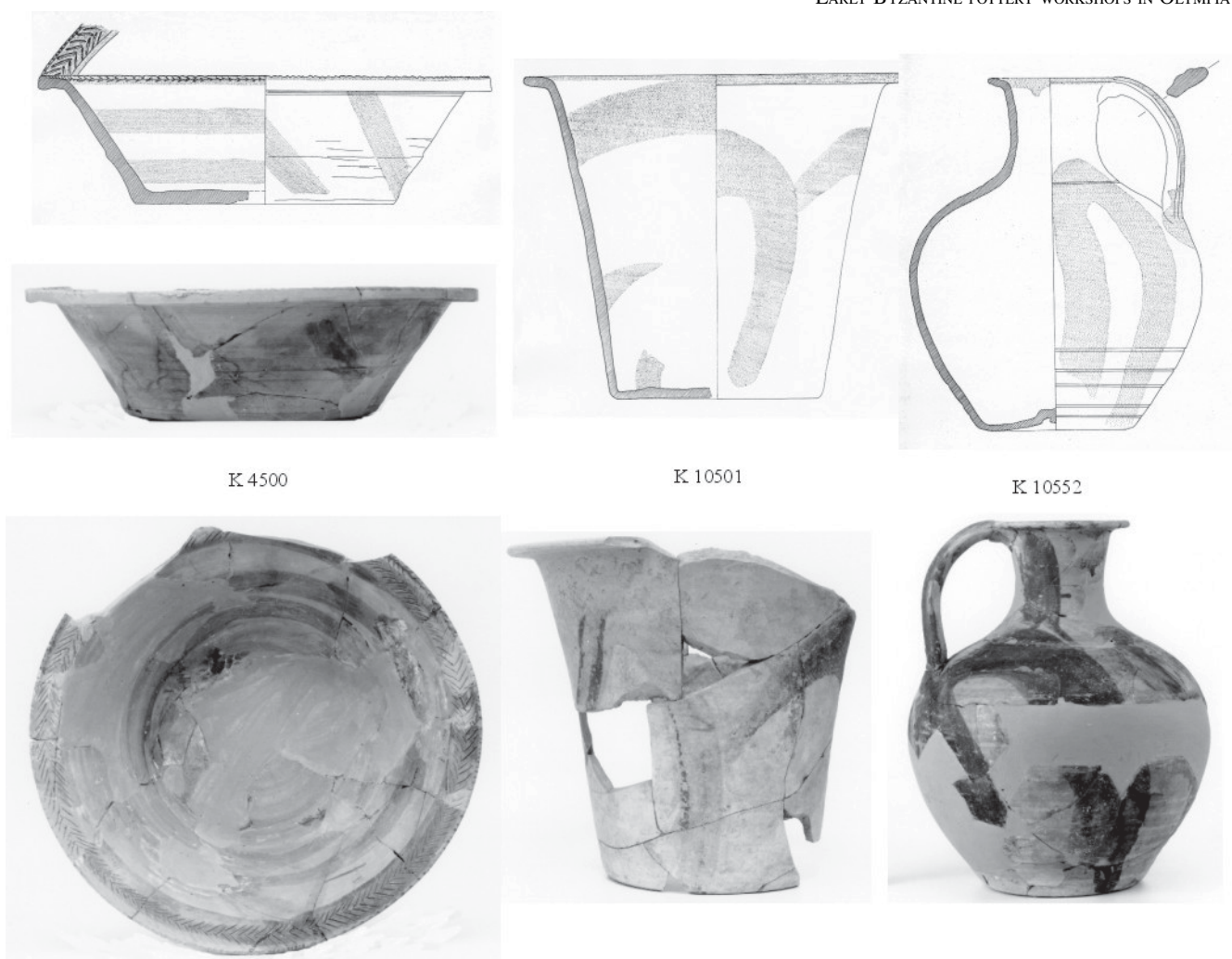


Fig. 4. Olympia. Basin, kalathos and jug from the debris of the late 5th century AD pottery workshop. – Scale ca. 1:6.

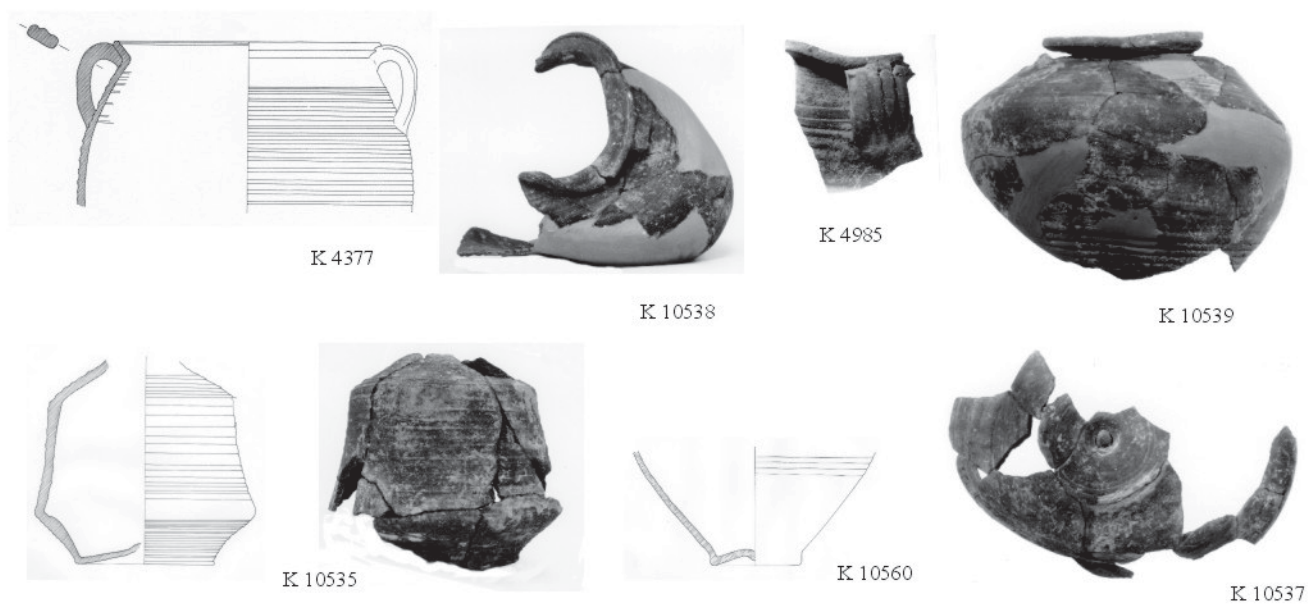


Fig. 5. Olympia. Cooking ware vessels from the debris of the late 5th century AD pottery workshop. – Scale ca. 1:6.

production sites, except for the new finds from Olympia, a mould of this type has recently been published from the neighbourhood of the Athenian Kerameikos¹⁷, documenting local production of the type in Athens, as already suggested earlier by Judith Perlzweig Binder.¹⁸

The moulds and lamps from Olympia can be grouped as follows:

- 1) imported lamps with »African« stamp motives similar to those in use on African and LRC ware,
- 2) locally produced moulds and lamps with »stamp« motives, copying the imported lamps, probably by means of surmoulage, and
- 3) locally produced moulds and lamps decorated with linear motives incised into the moulds.

The finds from Greece confirm that the round lamps are typologically younger than the African type, though they were in use contemporarily for a period. The provenience of the imported examples has not been verified. The stamp motives support that the type was influenced by Cyrenaican prototypes, as similar stamps are present on the workshop debris from El Mahrine.¹⁹ But round lamps seem to be missing or uncommon in this region.²⁰ As yet, there seems to be no proof for a workshop in Syracuse, either. The »imported« lamps from Olympia vary in colour, from light orange (K 4227, **fig. 6, 6**) to pink (K 4258, **fig. 6, 7**) to brown (K 4409,

fig. 6, 8). However, the type soon became popular in Attica, the Peloponnese and the southern Greek mainland and was imitated by local workshops as was the »African« type. It was in use until the abandonment of the Early Byzantine settlement of Olympia in the early 7th century and may have had some afterlife throughout the 7th century.²¹

For the stamp motives on lamps of the type Broneer 32 cf. stamps on African red-slip vessels in HAYES 1972, 248 stamp types 102–103 (Style C/D); 249 stamp type 116 (Style A(iii)); S. TORTORELLA in: *Atlante I*, 126 pl. 57 a stamp type 16; pl. 58 a stamp types 26–27; and stamps on Late Roman C (Phocaean red-slip; *Ceramica Microasiatica*) vessels: HAYES 1972, 323–370, especially 351–357 figs. 73–74 stamp types 7. 16; A. CARANDINI in: *Atlante I*, 231–232 pls. 114–115 stamp types 4; 20–21. On Late Roman C vessels, long and narrow rectangular stamp motives are notably well represented, though not identical with those used on the Broneer 32 lamps. Almost identical stamps were used sometimes on African sigillata from El Mahrine in Northern Tunisia, in *Dekor* (style) III, corresponding to HAYES 1972, style A(III)/E(I), see MACKENSEN 1993, 268–278, *Dekor III*, stamp type 140 colour pl. B fig. 5 pl. 13,22; stamp type 247 pl. 21,8; nos. 249–250 fig. 92 pl. 21,10–12. PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI 2002, 114–117 no. 110.

¹⁷ Cf. PERLZWEIG 1961, 193 nos. 2832–2837 pls. 44. 50 and ROBINSON 1959, 119 nos. M 381–M 382 pl. 46.

¹⁸ MACKENSEN 1993, see above footnote 16.

¹⁹ A. ENNABLI, *Lampes chrétiennes de Tunisie*. Musées du Bardo et de Carthage (Paris 1976) does not list any examples of the type.

²¹ See. F. FELTEN, *Die christliche Siedlung*. In: *Alt-Ägina I, 2* (Mainz 1975) 55–80, especially 64–67 nos. 62–63 pl. 18.

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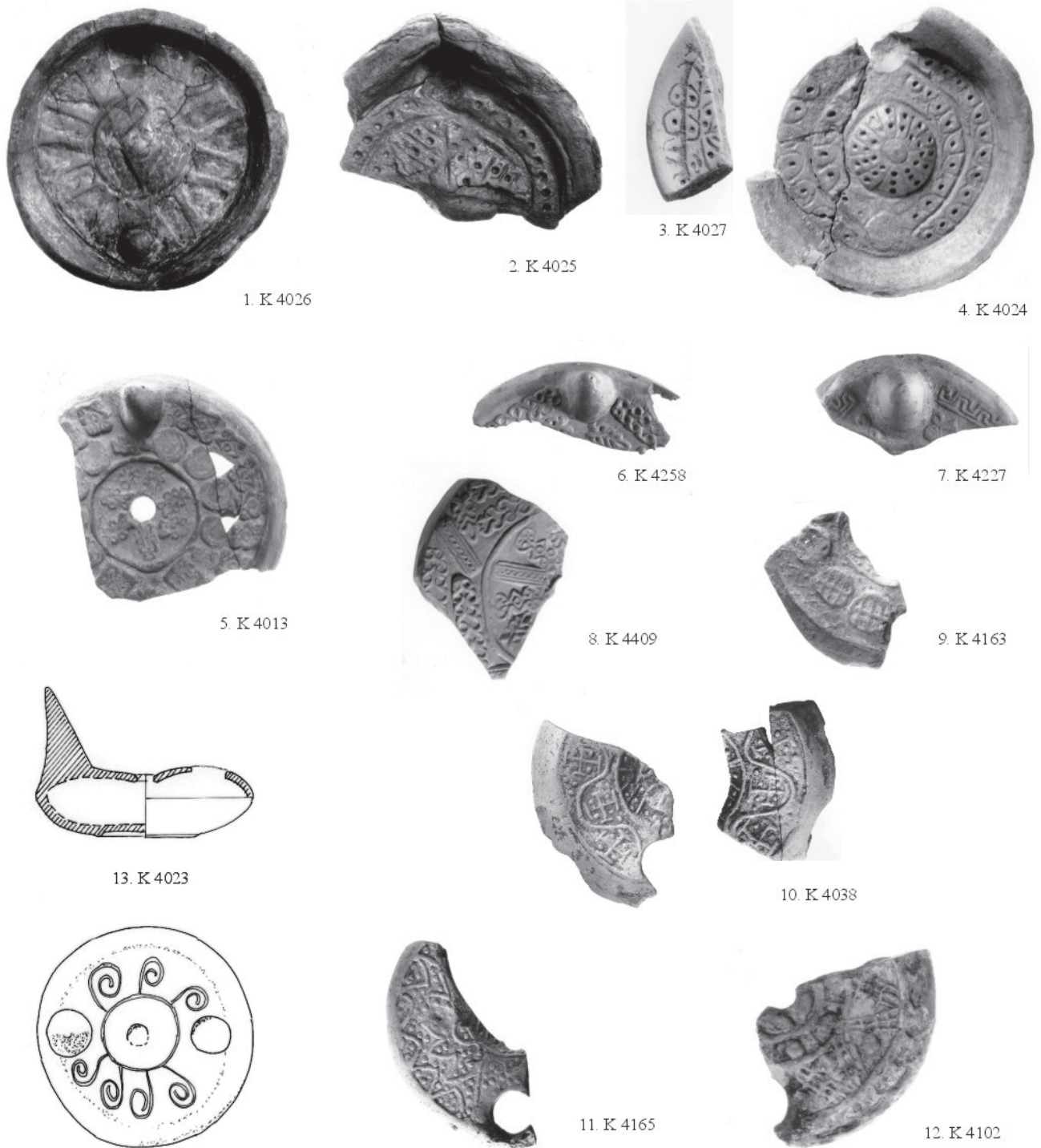


Fig. 6. Olympia. 1–5 Moulds and lamp (Broneer type 32), found north of the Prytaneion, from a local late 6th/early 7th century AD lamp workshop. – 6–13 Imported and local lamps of the same type from the adjoining area. – Scale ca. 1:2.

