



Sherds from around the Church

Pottery from the Panayia Church at Chonika, Argolis*

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ABSTRACT

Lately, attention has been drawn to the glazed pottery of the two main Argolic centers, Argos and Nauplio. However, our knowledge of the material culture of the rest of Argolis remains seriously limited. This paper aims to narrow that gap by examining the unpublished pottery dating from as early as the 10th century right up to the 19th, found in the area around the Byzantine church of Chonika.

INTRODUCTION

Chonika (*Χώνικα*), a village in the northeastern Peloponnese, lies 5.5km NE of Argos and 12km NW of Nauplio (Fig. 1).¹ Its position is significant: situated at the heart of the Argolic plain, the major source of central Argolis's economic prosperity and on one of the two main roads that led from Corinth to Argos through Ayionori and Prosymni (Berbati), known in antiquity as 'Kontoporeia'.² Although the attention of scholars, from as early as the late 19th century, was drawn to the important Middle Byzantine church of the Panayia that lies at the village's modern center, we know little about the history of the settlement or the function of the church, except for brief mentions in later sources. Both are mentioned in the Venetian archives of 1696 and 1700, the church as 'Αγία Παναγία' and the village as 'Χόνηκα', 'Cognica', or 'Ghonica'.³

The aim of this paper is to examine the unpublished pottery found in the 1993 rescue excavation in the hope of improving our knowledge of the material culture of medieval and post-medieval Argolis, as well as of the history of the church and the settlement.

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¹ According to G.D.R. Sanders (2015, 617), its name could have derived from the French toponym Honnecourt. However, a Greek origin could not be excluded, see Symeonidis 2010, 2:no. 18336: Χώνικας (*χώνικα* [μέρη]=steep locations). Today the village has been renamed Νέο Ηραίο i.e. New Heraion (see Pikoulas 2001, 490) after the neighboring ancient Heraion, although its inhabitants continue to use its previous name. Ancient Heraion was one of the major Argive sanctuaries in antiquity, see Piérart and Touchais 1996, 33–5, 53–6.

² On 'Kontoporeia', see mainly Pikoulas 1995, 42–5, 278–83; see also Sanders 2015, 590. On the 19th century see Miliarakis 1886, 62, 171.

³ Dokos 1971–1974, 70 no. 51; Panagiotopoulos 1987, 245, 293; Liata 2003, 25, 39, 94, 111–2, 114, 116.



Fig. 1. Map of Argolis.

THE CHURCH

The church of the Panayia functions today as the parish church, dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin (Fig. 2). A dedicatory inscription found a few meters SE of the church, dated by Georgios Velenis and Demetrios Athanasoulis to the second half of the 9th or the first half of the 10th century, points to the existence of an earlier church (Fig. 3). The inscription is an invocation to the Virgin, engraved on a marble architectural member.⁴

As for the existing church of the Panayia, it is a reference point for scholars of Byzantine church architecture (Fig. 2). It is typical of the so-called 'Hellenic School', dated to the 12th century (perhaps the first quarter) and built in the type of the complex four-columned cross-in-square church with three apses at the east end, a narthex at the west end and two porches on its western and southern sides.⁵ It displays close affinities with the important 12th- and 13th-century Argolic churches of Ayia Moni at Areia and Panayia at Merbaka, having some architectural elements in common such as the internal triconch formation of the bema, the re-use of ancient blocks and being built on a krepis. The church's outer facades are built using cloisonné masonry decorated with large stone crosses in the lower parts and decorative brick ornament in the middle and upper parts; only the masonry in the lower part of its eastern facade is faced with large stone blocks.⁶ Its dome and parts of its upper structure were rebuilt at a later phase, perhaps during the second Venetian occupation (1686–1715), when similar restorations were carried out on Byzantine churches like the Panayia church at Argos.⁷ Here, it

⁴ Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 102 no. 103 (D. Athanasoulis); Papachristodoulou 1967, 183, pl. 132:a.

⁵ Struck 1909, 196–201, 233–34; Hadji-Minaglou 1994; Bouras and Boura 2002, 325–28 and elsewhere with earlier bibliography; Athanasoulis 2016, 89–91. Cf. Sanders 2015, 617, for a different dating in the 13th century.

⁶ Megaw 1931–1932, 102, 108–9, 111–2, 117, 118–19, 123, 126, 129, fig. 5c, pl. 30:42–5; Hadji-Minaglou 1992, 117, 127, 131–2, pls. XIV:a, g, XV:b, d, e, XVI:a–c; Bouras and Boura 2002, 327, 389, 421, 462 and elsewhere. The immured ceramics that decorated the church's facades have not survived.

⁷ Hadji-Minaglou 1998, 224. The restoration of the Argive church is dated by inscription to the year 1699, see Hadjiminaglou 1980, 493.



Fig. 2. Chonika, Church of the Panaya, SE view.

should be noted that according to a local tradition, the church of Chonika was once the *katholikon* of a large male monastery and the presence of the monastery accounted for the formation of the settlement around it.⁸

In modern times restoration works were undertaken by the Archaeological Society at Athens between 1959 and 1963, under the supervision of Eustathios Stikas, on the upper part of the church, the southern and northern facades and the door frames,⁹ while in 1988 the church's roof was once again restored by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture.¹⁰

The Panaya's wall-paintings do not survive, as is the case with the majority of the Byzantine churches in the Argolid. However, in 1982 the 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities detected the existence of previous wall decoration in the bema, prothesis and on the templon through trial trenches.¹¹ Fragments of wall-paintings were also found in the excavation which will be the focus of the present paper.



Fig. 3. Chonika, Dedicatory inscription engraved on a marble architectural member found to the SE of the church, second half of the 9th–first half of the 10th century.

⁸ See Antonakatou 1973, 42, who also informs us that according to this tradition the former settlement lay around 800 m NW of the modern settlement, closer to ancient Heraion. However, we should bear in mind that the church is not mentioned as monastic in the above mentioned Venetian archives of 1696 (Dokos 1971–1974, 70 no. 51).

⁹ Orlando 1959, 243; 1960, 349, pl. 296; 1963, 220, figs. 1–2, pl. 192. See also Hadji-Minaglou 1998, 224.

¹⁰ Bakourou 1988. These restoration works were co-financed by the European Union.

¹¹ Bakourou 1982.



Fig. 4. Chonika, Plan of the excavation in the precincts of the Panayia church, 1993.

THE EXCAVATION

The pottery in question was found in 1993 in a rescue excavation undertaken by the 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities when a new pavement was being constructed in the surrounding area of the church (Fig. 4). The excavation was carried out under the direction of archaeologist Anastasia Oikonomou-Laniado with the assistance of archaeologist Chryssa Argyra. Despite the fact that the field data remains unpublished, the pottery unearthed can offer us useful evidence first of all on the pottery found at Argolis and secondly on the history of the church and the settlement.¹²

During the excavation a number of walls were revealed mainly at the southern and eastern perimeter of the church, as well as some pavements such as the stone-paved floor in the southern part (Fig. 4). Regrettably, the limited area excavated combined with the relatively shallow depth of excavation meant that we could glean little information about the function of the walls thus revealed.¹³

From the excavation notebook, we can deduce that the tombs that were uncovered were not very numerous: of these two cist tombs stand out in the northern part of the church grounds within a small rectangular building (Fig. 4).¹⁴ This is in sharp contrast to other Argolic Byzantine

¹² Regrettably, the archaeological diary is not sufficient by itself to elucidate all the aspects and questions raised by study of the excavation and its finds. For a brief mention of the excavation see Oikonomou-Laniado 2009, 208.

¹³ Nevertheless the existence of walls adjacent or very close to the church does not exclude the possibility of them belonging to monastic structures. The excavator Chryssa Argyra recorded in the field notebook (p. 235) that the walls revealed in the northwestern part of the church belonged to a monastery.

¹⁴ Cf. Tsekes 2009, 165–6, pls. 32–3, for a similar building in the southern part of the churchyard at Plataniti. Georgios Tsekes suggests that initially the building served as an *arcosolium*, which would have opened on to the inside of the church, and dated it ca. early 11th century. Unfortunately, the Chonika tombs could not provide us with a secure dating: tomb 1 was disturbed, while some 13th-century glazed pottery was found

churches, such as Ayios Ioannis Theologos at Ligourio and the churches of Merbaka, Plataniti, and Lalioteika/Ano Epidavros, where tombs and transferred relics were abundant.¹⁵

The majority of the ceramics were found in the southern part of the church precincts, mostly the southeastern part, like the majority of the architectural remains; the rest were found in the northern part, while only a few sherds come from the eastern and western parts.¹⁶

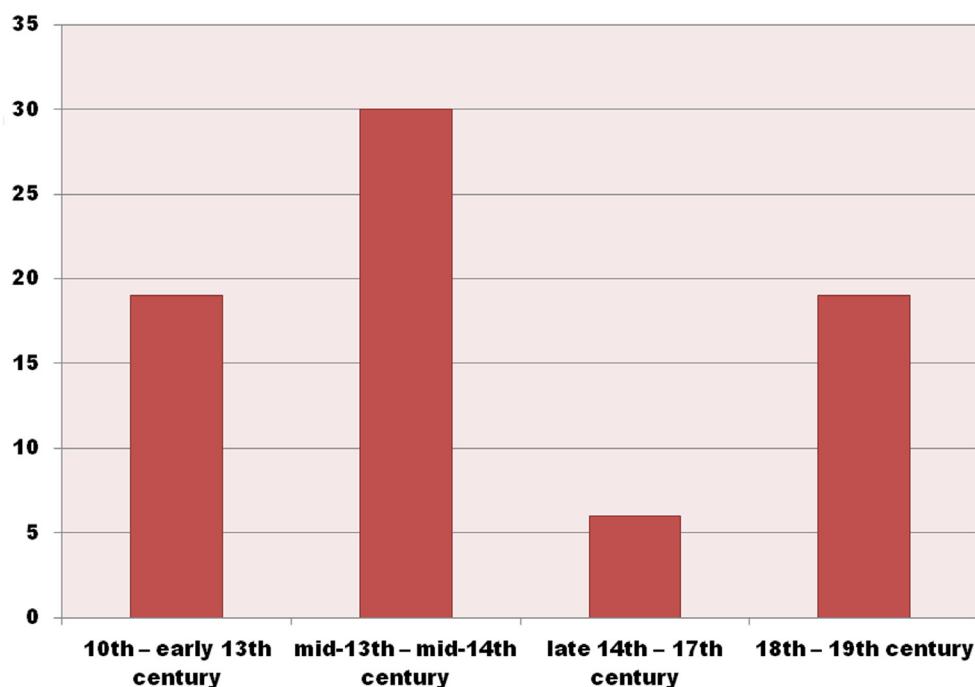


Chart 1. Chronological sequence of the diagnostic pottery of the Chonika assemblage

THE POTTERY¹⁷

To date no extensive archaeological research has been carried out in the rural areas of Argolis, with the exception of the important surveys by the Swedish Institute at Athens in the areas of Prosymni (Berbati) and Limnes.¹⁸ However, in recent years our knowledge of the medieval and post-medieval ceramics of the two major Argolic centers, Argos and Nauplio, has been enhanced.¹⁹

around it and tomb 2, although intact, contained only a few finds. For a brief mention of the Chonika tombs see Laskaris 2000, 111.

¹⁵ On Ayios Ioannis Theologos at Ligourio see Vassiliou 2009, 302, fig. 7; on the Panayia at Merbaka see Gérolymou 1999, 539; on the Transfiguration of the Savior at Plataniti see Tsekes 2009, 169; on the Byzantine church at Lalioteika in Ano Epidavros see Oikonomou 1989, 305.

¹⁶ This is understandable at the east end, given the limited amount of free space available in this part of the church's perimeter. It should also be noted that in some cases it was not possible to specify the exact find spot of some sherds due to the concise character of the data in the excavation records.

¹⁷ The 13th-16th-century imported glazed wares are part of the author's ongoing post-doctoral research at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens under the supervision of Prof. Platon Petridis.

¹⁸ See Wells 1996; Hahn 1996; Lindblom and Wells 2011; Hjohlman 2011. Another significant survey with an in-depth diachronic study of the settlements was carried out in SE Argolis (general area of Hermionis), see Jameson *et al.* 1994; Sutton 2000.

¹⁹ See Yangaki 2012; Vassiliou 2014; Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016.



Fig. 5a, b. Small upper part of a chafing dish, Unslipped Glazed Red Ware, 10th (-early 11th) century (cat. no. 1).

Fig. 6a, b. Small upper body and rim fragment of an open vessel (cup?), Glazed White Ware, second half of the 11th (-early 12th) century (cat. no. 2). 7a, b. Base and body fragment of an open vessel, Fine Sgraffito Ware, second quarter-mid-12th century (cat. no. 3).

As for the Chonika assemblage the unearthed pottery encompasses a wide time-span from at least as early as the 10th century right up to the 19th (Chart 1). For the present study I have selected the most representative diagnostic specimens, with emphasis primarily on the ceramics found in Argolis. In recent decades a considerable number of comprehensive handbooks, monographs, and museum catalogues containing extensive bibliography on each ceramic category have been published.²⁰

On the whole there was only a modest amount of pottery found, bearing in mind that the excavation only reached a depth of ca. 1.00–1.20m from the second step of the krepis. Furthermore, the depth of the excavation per se implied that most of the archaeological strata must have been disturbed, bearing also in mind that the excavated area was in the center of the village; indeed, this was confirmed by the pottery contexts, with the exception of some contexts dated to the 13th century.

The majority of the pottery unearthed was unglazed. However, there are about 150 glazed pottery sherds, i.e. a significant part of the assemblage. Most of the pottery finds are in a fragmentary state, which impedes their documentation, especially regarding their shape.

10th-early 13th century²¹

The earliest diagnostic specimen of the assemblage dates to the 10th (-early 11th) century.²² It is a small fragment of a red-ware chafing dish (cat. no. 1; Fig. 5a, b) sharing the characteristics of a group of chafing dishes found in neighboring Argos.²³ This elaborate type of clay vessel

²⁰ See Hayes 1992; Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999; Papanikola-Bakirtzi *et al.* 1999; Dark 2001; Kalopissi-Verti 2003; Vroom 2005; Bormpoudaki 2007; Papanikola-Bakirtzi and Zekos 2007; Skartsis 2012; Yangaki 2012.

²¹ On Middle Byzantine period in Argolis (843–1209) see Lambrynidis 2001, 18–33; Bon 1951, 165 and elsewhere; Zenginis 1968, 164–93; Savvides 1991–1992, 287–96; 1994, 359–74; Jameson *et al.* 1994, 112–6; Piérart and Touchais 1996, 92–4; Vassiliou 2013, 217–20. For a concise presentation of its monuments during this period see Konti 1983.

²² It is highly probable that had the excavation gone deeper, earlier finds would have appeared.

²³ Vassiliou 2016, 259, 268 no. 14, fig. 15a, b, and elsewhere. For a similar chafing dish fragment from Argos see Vassiliou 2016, 268 no. 13. On similarities with chafing dishes from Corinth, see Vassiliou 2016, 263.

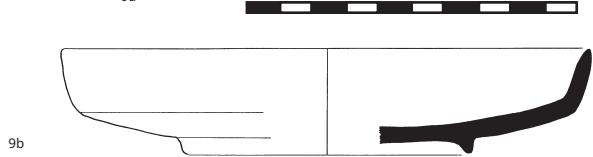
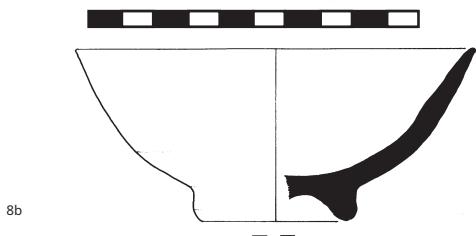
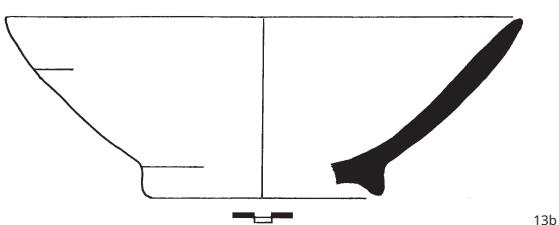


Fig. 8a, b. Small bowl, partly preserved, Fine Sgraffito Ware, Mid–third quarter of 12th century (cat. no. 4). 9a, b. Dish, partly preserved, Fine Sgraffito Ware, third quarter of 12th century (cat. no. 5). 10. Two body fragments of an open vessel, Slip-Painted Ware – Light on Dark, third quarter of 12th century (cat. no. 6). 11a, b. Dish, partly preserved, Incised Sgraffito Ware, last quarter of 12th–first quarter of 13th century (cat. no. 7). 12. Two body fragments of a bowl, Champlévé Ware, first quarter of 13th century (cat. no. 8). 13a, b. Small bowl, partly preserved, Green and Brown Painted Ware, last quarter of 12th–first quarter of 13th century (cat. no. 9)



is mostly found in coastal and urban areas of the central and eastern Mediterranean, while it is rarely attested in small settlements or rural areas. In Argolis it is found mainly in Argos from at least as early as the 9th century through to the 11th or even the 12th century, both in white- and red-ware²⁴, while an early 9th century specimen was found at Nauplio in the castle of Akronauplia.²⁵ A later specimen of the late 11th-early 12th century with totally different characteristics was found in the Middle Byzantine church at Lalioteika/Ano Epidavros.²⁶

Another early fragment is an upper body and rim fragment of a glazed white ware vessel (cup?) (cat. no. 2; Fig. 6a, b). It displays characteristics of Hayes's Glazed White Ware III group (white, hard, fairly clean fabric, green glaze).²⁷ It could therefore be dated to the second half of the 11th or the early 12th century.²⁸ As for its place of manufacture, Constantinople is generally accepted as the main site of glazed white-ware production.²⁹ It is found mostly in urban areas of the Empire, though in small quantities, as in Argos.³⁰ Thus the discovery of this ware at Chonika is of some importance. Nevertheless, this is not a unique find in rural Argolis; another glazed white ware cup (?) was found not very far from Chonika, in the Limnes area.³¹

Red-ware pottery of the 12th-early 13th century is better represented. There are four sherds of Fine Sgraffito Ware, one of the most popular and characteristic wares of Middle Byzantine glazed pottery.³² A base fragment decorated with a central medallion containing a quadruped (cat. no. 3; Fig. 7a, b), could be dated to the second quarter-mid-12th century, while its fabric and surface treatment display similarities with Corinthian glazed wares (e.g. Fine Sgraffito, Measles etc.).³³ There is also a monochrome green glazed bowl fragment in the assemblage with similar fabric and outer surface treatment, which could also be dated to this period. This type of pottery, which has close affinities with Corinthian wares, constitutes a common find at Argos,³⁴ while fewer specimens have been found at Nauplio.³⁵

No. 4, a small partly-preserved bowl with typical Fine Sgraffito decoration consisting of scrolls arranged in a central medallion and a wider band below the lip containing similar motifs recalls some examples that may be of Argive production; it could be dated around the mid- to third quarter of the 12th century (Fig. 8a, b).³⁶

On chafing dishes in general see Bakirtzis 2003, 55–65; Sanders 1995, 261–5, 278–80; Arthur 2007, 179–80; Poulou-Papadimitriou 2008, 67–8; François 2010, 351–4; Vroom 2012, 364–7; Vassiliou 2016, esp. 252–5, with earlier bibliography.

²⁴ Vassiliou 2016; Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 170 no. 233, 171 nos. 235–6 (A. Vassiliou).

²⁵ Vassiliou 2016, 266 no. 7, fig. 8a, b; Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 170 no. 234 (A. Vassiliou).

²⁶ Vassiliou 2016, 275 no. 44, fig. 45.

²⁷ Hayes 1992, 29–30.

²⁸ Hayes 1992, 30. However, we should mention the difficulty of attributing glazed white wares to a specific group (I–V) based only on the literature.

²⁹ Megaw and Jones 1983, 236; Hayes 1992, 12; Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2003, 47–50; Waksman and Girgin 2008, 458, 467–8, no. IST 2, figs. 25b, 26.

³⁰ See Vassiliou 2014, I:41–67, II:24–30 nos. 1–16; on Nauplio see Yangaki 2012, 37–8, 73 no. 1, fig. 1. The ongoing research from previous excavations at the castle of Akronauplia conducted by the author shows that Nauplio should have a good sample of glazed white ware.

³¹ Hahn 1996, 424 (no. 232, fig. 113), 432.

³² Only three of them are described here. On Fine Sgraffito Ware see mainly Morgan 1942, 116–35; Sanders 1995, 68–9, 248; Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999, 18–9; Papanikola-Bakirtzi *et al.* 1999, 58–80. On this ware's main characteristics and distribution see Vroom 2005, 84–5.

³³ On the fabric, which resembles macroscopically the Corinthian 'Clay Pellet fabric', see White *et al.* 2009. Another Fine Sgraffito fragment of the assemblage, not included in the catalogue, also has a similar fabric.

³⁴ Vassiliou 2014, I, esp. 282–5 (Group B).

³⁵ Yangaki 2012, 49–50, 82–3 nos. 37–40, figs. 33–6.

³⁶ See Vassiliou 2014, 2:185–6 nos. 353–4. See also Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999, 33 no. 13 (E. Katsara). On the evidence for Argive glazed pottery production in the 12th-early 13th century see Vassiliou 2014, 1: esp. 294–305 (Group D). However, it should be noted that these observations concerning the Argive production, are



Fig. 14. Body fragments of cooking pots, Unglazed Coarse Ware, second half of 12th-mid-13th century (cat. no. 10). 15. Body fragment of an open vessel, Late Sgraffito Ware, 13th century (cat. no. 11). 16. Base and body fragment of an open vessel, Late Sgraffito Ware, 13th century (cat. no. 12). 17. Base and body fragment of an open vessel, Late Sgraffito Ware, 13th century (cat. no. 13). 18. Two rim fragments of an open vessel, Colored Sgraffito Ware, 13th century (cat. no. 14). 19. Two upper body and rim fragments of a bowl, Late Slip-Painted Ware, 13th century (cat. no. 15). 20a, b. Base and body fragment of a bowl(?), Glaze Painted Ware, 13th century (cat. no. 16). 21. Small rim fragment of a dish, Protomaiolica salentina, third quarter of 13th century (cat. no. 17). 22. Small rim fragment of a bowl, Invetriata policromia, 14th-15th(?) century (cat. no. 18).

No. 5 belongs to a typical dish form with the equally typical Fine Sgraffito decoration organized in a central medallion encircled by a wider band (Fig. 9a, b), a type with numerous parallels all over the Byzantine Empire and beyond.³⁷ No. 6 is ascribed to the Slip-Painted, Light on Dark category (Fig. 10), which is equally widely distributed.³⁸ Both could be dated to around the third quarter of the 12th century.³⁹ No. 7, a partly-preserved Incised Sgraffito dish, is decorated with a quadruped in the so-called Silhouetted Style (Fig. 11a, b).⁴⁰ These dishes, which constitute Morgan's Free Style group, are mostly known for their figural themes, especially warriors depicted on a large scale.⁴¹ Our specimen could be dated between the last quarter of the 12th and the first quarter of the 13th century. No. 8, a Champlevé bowl fragment, depicts an extremely popular subject in this category: a rabbit within a central medallion (Fig. 12). This fragment should be dated to the first quarter of the 13th century.⁴²

The fabric, shape, surface treatment and decoration of nos. 5–8 point to the large pottery workshop(s) of the time and the so-called main 'Middle Byzantine Production' (or MBP) of the second half of the 12th and the first quarter of the 13th century.⁴³ This production was widely distributed as part of trans-regional commerce, mainly to the urban centers of the Byzantine Empire. As is to be expected, it is well attested at Argos and Nauplio,⁴⁴ with a few catalogued specimens from the rest of Argolis (Lalioteika/Ano Epidavros,⁴⁵ Ligourio,⁴⁶ Limnes,⁴⁷ and Asini⁴⁸).

Green and Brown Painted Ware is represented solely by a late specimen from the last quarter of the 12th or the first quarter of the 13th century, possibly of Argive manufacture (cat. no. 9; Fig. 13a, b). The bowl is decorated only with green glaze⁴⁹ and is characterized by the absence of the covering glaze as is the case with many Argive green and brown painted ceramics.⁵⁰ Apart from Argos, where this pottery abounds, some specimens have been found in Nauplio,⁵¹ while only a few come from neighboring Plataniti⁵² and Prosymni.⁵³ Similarly Green and Brown

based on macroscopic examination and should be tested archaeometrically.

³⁷ Morgan (1942, 127–35) named this style 'Developed'.

³⁸ See Morgan 1942, 95–103; Sanders 1995, 64, 241–2; Papanikola-Bakirtzi et al. 1999, 53; Vroom 2005, 80–1.

³⁹ See Sanders 2003, 41.

⁴⁰ On the Silhouetted Style see Armstrong 1991, 345, fig. 6. On Incised Sgraffito Ware in general see Morgan 1942, 146–57; Papanikola-Bakirtzi et al. 1999, 85–100; Vroom 2005, 90–1.

⁴¹ Morgan 1942, 150–7. It should be noted that the Free Style group in its later, more naïf, version, is similar to or in some cases the same as the so-called Aegean Ware; on the latter see Megaw 1975.

⁴² On Champlevé Ware see Morgan 1942, 162–6; Sanders 1993, 260–1; Papanikola-Bakirtzi et al. 1999, 101–2; Vroom 2005, 92–3.

⁴³ On these workshops see Waksman et al. 2014, who presumed that Chalcis was their base.

⁴⁴ On Argos see Vassiliou 2014, 1: esp. 285–94 (Group C); on Nauplio see Yangaki 2012, 40–1 and elsewhere.

⁴⁵ See some specimens in Oikonomou 1989, 307.

⁴⁶ Vassiliou 2009, 302–3.

⁴⁷ Some specimens from an unpublished survey by Anastasia Oikonomou-Laniado; see also Hahn 1996, 412 fig. 100 (uncatalogued fragment at bottom left).

⁴⁸ Unpublished material from the medieval fortifications at 'Kastraki'. I thank my colleague Georgia Ivou for putting this unpublished material at my disposal.

⁴⁹ I have preferred the term Green and Brown Painted to Glaze Painted Ware, because in other similar specimens there is also brown along with the green, see for example Vassiliou 2013, 221 fig. 194. Furthermore, the arrangement of the decoration combined with the vessel's manufacture points to a local version of Green and Brown Painted Ware.

⁵⁰ Vassiliou 2014, 1:108–13.

⁵¹ Unpublished specimens from the Akronauplia castle; they are currently being studied by the author.

⁵² Unpublished specimen from the Plataniti excavation.

⁵³ Hahn 1996, 350 no. 2, 376 no. 68, fig. 53.

Painted Ware without the covering glaze has also been found at Corinth,⁵⁴ Sparta,⁵⁵ Nichoria/Messinia,⁵⁶ Athens,⁵⁷ and on Crete.⁵⁸

The following Middle Byzantine glazed wares are absent from the Chonika assemblage: Slip-Painted Ware – Dark on Light, Green and Brown Painted Ware of the main 'MBP', Spatter Painted Ware, Measles Ware, Painted Sgraffito Ware. To date these wares are equally absent or sparsely represented outside the two major Argolic centers.

As for the unglazed wares, the assemblage contains a few fragments of cooking pots, probably dated to the second half of the 12th to the mid-13th century (cat. no. 10; Fig. 14).⁵⁹ Cooking pots of similar shape and fabric, dated to the 12th century, have been found at Argos,⁶⁰ while the type continues until the mid-13th century with examples from Corinth.⁶¹

Mid-13th–mid-14th century

The majority of the diagnostic pottery and the more secure contexts belong to this period (esp. the 13th century) (Chart 1), which coincides to a large extent with the Frankish occupation of the area (1212–1388).⁶² Several specimens belong to the so-called Late Sgraffito Ware possibly of Argive production, dated mainly to the 13th century (cat. no. 11; Fig. 15).⁶³ One of them depicts a male figure, perhaps a warrior (cat. no. 12; Fig. 16). There are also a few Late Sgraffito specimens dated to the 13th century, which must have been imports.⁶⁴ I present here one characteristic specimen which bears a simple decoration with incised concentric circles, by far the most common motif of Late Sgraffito Ware (cat. no. 13; Fig. 17). It stands out by virtue of its more refined fabric and surface treatment.

The assemblage also contains some typical 13th-century wares, which could be ascribed to local (perhaps Argive) production: Colored Sgraffito Ware (cat. no. 14; Fig. 18),⁶⁵ Late Slip-Painted Ware (cat. no. 15; Fig. 19),⁶⁶ and Glazed Painted Ware (cat. no. 16; Fig. 20a, b).⁶⁷ The latter has a well-cut hole at its center, indicating re-use.⁶⁸

⁵⁴ Morgan 1942, 77–80.

⁵⁵ Sanders 1993, 258.

⁵⁶ Rosser 1983, 382 no. P1719, fig. 10:40, pl. 10:23.

⁵⁷ Waagé 1933, 323–4, fig. 18g; Frantz 1938, 442 no. A17, figs. 6, 33 & 443 no. A20, fig. 4.

⁵⁸ Poulou-Papadimitriou 2008, 42, 90 no. 16, pls. 6:16, 44–5; Yangaki 2008, 212–3.

⁵⁹ I thank Dr. Rossana Valente for her useful remarks.

⁶⁰ Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 165 no. 217 (R. Valente).

⁶¹ Stillwell MacKay 2003, 410, fig. 24:3; see also Vroom 2005, 104–5.

⁶² On this period see Lambrynidis 2001, 39–53; Luttrell 1966; Zenginis 1968, 193–8; Bon 1969, 484–96; Savvides 1991–1992, 296–8; Jameson *et al.* 1994, 116–23; Piérart and Touchais 1996, 95–6; Topping 2000, 26–8; Vassiliou 2013, 221.

⁶³ On Late Sgraffito Ware in general see Sanders 1987, 163–6; Sanders 1993, 256–7; Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999, 23; Papanikola-Bakirtzi *et al.* 1999, 125–48. At Argos (and possibly Nauplio) during the 13th century, there must have been local production of Late Sgraffito and other glazed wares. On kilns found at Argos, on the Kontoyianni plot, possibly dated to this period see Oikonomou-Laniado 2006, 348. On remnants of Byzantine pottery workshops at Argos in general see Vassiliou 2014, 1:298–302. On a tripod stilt found at Nauplio see Yangaki 2012, 183–4, no. 146, figs. 128–9.

⁶⁴ On Late Sgraffito specimens from Nauplio see Yangaki 2012, 57–60, 85–7 nos. 45–55, figs. 38–40, 44–51.

⁶⁵ On Colored Sgraffito Ware see Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999, 23; Papanikola-Bakirtzi *et al.* 1999, 149–60.

⁶⁶ On Late Slip-Painted Ware see Morgan 1942, 101–3; Stillwell MacKay 1967, 261–2; Sanders 1993, 261–3; 2003, 41; Stillwell MacKay 2003, 404; on the dating of no. 15 see also Papanikola-Bakirtzi and Zekos 2007, 125 nos. 136–7 (N. Zekos).

⁶⁷ On 13th-century Glaze Painted Ware see Morgan 1942, 80–3; Stillwell MacKay 2003, 409.

⁶⁸ The piercing of vessels for various secondary uses was a common practice in the medieval and post-medieval period; see for example similar holes at the bottom of Colored Sgraffito bowls from Serres in Dadaki 1997, 892, pl. 330b. In the Serres' case Dadaki presumes a possible connection with burial rites. Unfortunately we do not know the exact find spot of no. 16.



Fig. 23. Base and body fragment of a bowl, Veneto Ware, late 13th-early 14th century (cat. no. 19). 24a-c. Small fragments of closed vessels, Matt-Painted Ware, 12th-13th century (cat. nos. 20a-c). 25. Base and body fragment of an open vessel, Colored Sgraffito Ware, 15th (-16th) century (cat. no. 21). Fig. 26. Three body fragments of an open vessel, Maiolica berettina, 17th century (cat. no. 22). 27. Small body fragment of a bowl, Late Maiolica, Late 17th-early 18th century (cat. no. 23). 28. Body fragment of a closed vessel, Green Painted Ware, 17th-early 18th century (cat. no. 24).

All the above mentioned wares are common finds at Argos and Nauplio, and to a lesser extent in rural Argolis, e.g. the areas of Prosymni⁶⁹ and Limnes,⁷⁰ Asini and Ligourio.⁷¹ No Zeuxippus Ware was found, although it is well documented in Argos and Nauplio,⁷² but there are scant finds from the rest of Argolis. Likewise absent is Thessaloniki Ware, which is well represented in Nauplio and Argos.⁷³

⁶⁹ Hahn 1996, 352 no. 11, fig. 11; 357-8 no. 22, fig. 19; 368 no. 53, figs. 41-2; 375 no. 64, fig. 49.

⁷⁰ Hahn 1996, 403 no. 121, figs. 89-90; 407 no. 135, fig. 96; 408 nos. 140, 143, figs. 95, 97, 100; 411 no. 155, figs. 96, 99.

⁷¹ Unpublished material.

⁷² For published examples from Nauplio see Yangaki 2012, 53-4, 83-4 nos. 41-3, figs. 37, 41-2.

⁷³ On Nauplio see Yangaki 2012, 64-9, 89-93 nos. 62-72, figs. 54-64.

The conquest and partitioning of the Byzantine Empire by the Crusaders paved the way for the import of glazed Italian wares in the newly formed crusader states, especially from the mid-13th century onwards.⁷⁴ The area of Argolis was no exception. In the Chonika assemblage there are single examples of wares such as a *protomaiolica salentina* dish fragment with the typical blue chevron band at the rim, dated to around the third quarter of the 13th century (cat. no. 17; Fig. 21).⁷⁵ More popular in many crusader areas were the *protomaiolica* bowls with similar decoration below their rim and a grid-patterned medallion at their center ('grid-iron' bowls).⁷⁶ The best known examples from Argolis are the immured bowls of the Merbaka church.⁷⁷

Macroscopically no. 18 resembles the south Italian wares (Fig. 22). Its whitish fabric recalls that of the Salento area, while the red color of the decoration and the lead glaze coating (without the white slip background) show similarities with *invetriata policroma* type 'RMR'. Examples of the latter date from the second half of the 13th to the 15th century and are characterized by the use of red, brown and green colors.⁷⁸ However, in our sample blue is used instead of green. This, along with the fact that its exterior surface is lead-glazed, makes its classification as so-called RMR Ware dubious.

No. 19 bears the characteristics of the so-called *Veneto Ware* (Fig. 23). It is an *invetriata monocroma*, with no decoration on the preserved part. *Veneto Ware* is mostly known for its carinated medium-sized bowls with or without slip, undecorated or decorated with an incised spiral at the center (*tipo spirale-cerchio*), or with roulette decoration on the upper half of the exterior, or both.⁷⁹ These ceramics were products of Venice, dating to the late 13th to early 14th century.⁸⁰ There are relatively few specimens in Nauplio and Argos compared to other Italian wares.⁸¹ According to Italian scholars, the immured ceramics of the Merbaka church, decorated with incised spirals are likely to be of Venetian origin and the *spirale-cerchio* type.⁸²

Maiolica arcaica, which is so common at Argos though represented by fewer specimens from Nauplio and just one probable specimen from Limnes, is absent from the present assemblage.⁸³

As regards the unglazed diagnostic sherds, approximately 20 fragments of closed vessels were found ornamented with simple linear motifs in colored pigment (red, dark brown, black, or white) (cat. nos. 20a-c; Fig. 24a-c). This ware, known as Matt-Painted Ware or *ceramica dip-*

⁷⁴ See Sanders 1989, 191–4; Sanders 2003, 41–2. On Nauplio see Yangaki 2012, 195–200; Vassiliou 2017, 333.

⁷⁵ On *protomaiolica* in general see Sanders 1987, 166–70; Patitucci Uggeri 1997; Riavez 2000. On its distribution see Skartsis 2012, 46–7. For its dating see Sanders 2003, 41–2.

⁷⁶ Patitucci Uggeri 1985, 348–50 and elsewhere; Sanders 1987, 167–70; Sanders 1989, 191–4.

⁷⁷ Megaw 1964–1965, 147–8, 153–8, 159–60 nos. 9–20, figs. 5–6, 7:16; Nikolakopoulos 1979, 13–4, 29–30 nos. 37–43, figs. 69–80; Patitucci Uggeri 1985, 367–9, fig. 9; Sanders 1989, 189–94; Sanders 2015, 584, 591–3 and elsewhere. *Protomaiolica* is also found at Argos: Oikonomou-Laniado 1993, 308–12, figs. 1–5; Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 239–240 nos. 384–6 (A. Vassiliou), and Nauplio: Yangaki 2012, 100, 148 nos. 80–1, figs. 71, 73; Vassiliou 2017, 334.

⁷⁸ On *invetriata policroma* type 'RMR' or Polychrome Lead Glazed Ware, a typical product of the Apulian region with several production centers, see mainly Dufournier et al. 1986; Sanders 1987, 170–1; Skartsis 2012, 48–53; Yangaki 2012, 95–7.

⁷⁹ On *Veneto Ware* see Stillwell MacKay 1967, 254–5; Gelichi 1986, 383–6, 388; Williams 1993, 268–70.

⁸⁰ Flawed ceramics and tripod stils were found at Malamocco, see Saccardo 1993, 209, 234. On the dating of the ware see Stillwell MacKay 1967, 250–1.

⁸¹ On Nauplio see Yangaki 2012, 115–7, 152–3 nos. 94–6, figs. 89–90. On Argos see a brief mention in Oikonomou-Laniado 1993, 309.

⁸² Gelichi 1993, 32, 36; Saccardo 1993, 202–3, 235.

⁸³ Argos: Oikonomou-Laniado 1993, 308; Bakourou et al. 2003, 234, fig. 5; Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 241–3 nos. 388–90 (A. Vassiliou). Nauplio: Yangaki 2012, 102–3, 148–9 nos. 82–4, figs. 76–8; Vassiliou 2017, 334, fig. 2. Limnes: Hahn 1996, 403 no. 122, 434.



Fig. 29a, b. Base and body fragments of an open vessel, Marbled Ware, 18th–early 19th century (cat. no. 25). Fig. 30. Small upper body and rim fragment of a cup, Kütahya Ware, 18th century (cat. no. 26). Fig. 31. Body fragment and part of lip of a dish, Çanakkale Ware, late 18th–early 19th century (cat. no. 27). Fig. 32. Upper body and rim fragment of a dish, Drip-Painted Ware, late 18th–early 19th century (cat. no. 28). Fig. 33. Tobacco pipe, late 18th–first half of 19th century (cat. no. 29). Fig. 34. Rim fragment of a dish, Polychrome Painted Maiolica, 19th century (cat. no. 30). Fig. 35. Glass bottle, 18th–19th century. Fig. 36. Copper-alloy lamp, Late or Post-Byzantine period

intia, with its simple way of decorating vessels of everyday use, became popular in the Peloponnese from the 12th century onwards.⁸⁴ Matt-Painted abounds at Argos,⁸⁵ and is common in the area around Prosymni⁸⁶ and Limnes.⁸⁷ An interesting assemblage of 13th–14th-century Matt-Painted vessels in a variety of forms was discovered in a deposit in the apse of the Early Byzantine basilica at Kephaliari, 5.5 km southwest of Argos (Fig. 1).⁸⁸ As for the specimens of the Chonika assemblage, most of them could be ascribed to what might be considered local (perhaps Argive) production (cat. nos. 20b, c – Fig. 24b, c), dating mainly to the 12th–13th century⁸⁹, while two of them (of which one is no. 20a – Fig. 24a), judging by their fabric and decoration, point to the so-called ‘Protogeometric’ group.⁹⁰

Late 14th–19th century

The period from the late 14th up to the 19th century coincides with several periods when Argolis was occupied by the Venetians or the Ottomans.⁹¹ In 1821–1830 Argolis, like the whole of the Peloponnese, found itself at the epicenter of activities during the Greek War of Independence, while in 1827–1834 Nauplio became the capital of the modern Greek state (a kingdom from 1832).⁹²

Only a few sherds in the assemblage can be ascribed to the late 14th–17th century (Chart 1). Two of them are fragments with colored sgraffito decoration, possibly of the 15th or even the 16th century (cat. no. 21; Fig. 25).⁹³ Popular Italian wares, found in substantial numbers at Nauplio⁹⁴, such as *graffite rinascimentali*, the so-called ‘ladder medallion’ jugs (or ‘blue on white maiolica’) or *maioliche rinascimentali*, are totally absent from our assemblage. A similar situation arises in the Prosymni/Limnes area.⁹⁵ The only maiolica specimens are some sherds of a *maiolica berettina* vessel (cat. no. 22; Fig. 26). This ware, which is common in Nauplio,⁹⁶ is

⁸⁴ Stillwell MacKay 1967, 279–88; Sanders 1993, 269–75; Skartsis 2012, 113–4. This type of decoration was also popular in Argolis during the 6th–early 7th century, see for example the jugs from the Andritsa cave in Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 74–5 nos. 88–91 (L. Kormazopoulou).

⁸⁵ Piérart and Thalmann 1980, 470, 473, 480 (nos. B37, B41, pl. IX), 482 (nos. D9–11, fig. 8, pl. X); Oikonomou-Laniado 1993, 307–8; 1997, 237, figs. 1–3; 2006, 346–47, fig. 5; Bakourou *et al.* 2003, 235, fig. 7; Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 157 nos. 197, 198; 158–9 nos. 200–2; 161 no. 206; 162 nos. 208–10 (A. Vassiliou and R. Valente).

⁸⁶ Hahn 1996, 350, 352 (no. 10, fig. 11), 357, 380, 382 (no. 82, figs. 61–2), 383 (no. 83, fig. 62), 434; Hjohlman 2011, 132–3, 140 nos. 325–8, figs. 96–7.

⁸⁷ Hahn 1996, 408 (fig. 96: uncatalogued fragment at bottom right), 415 (nos. 177–83, fig. 104), 434.

⁸⁸ Kritzas 1973–1974, 245, pl. 167c; Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 158 no. 199, 160 no. 205, 161 no. 207 (A. Vassiliou and R. Valente).

⁸⁹ No. 21c belongs in the same context as other 13th-century sherds, incl. the protomaiolica specimen. I thank Dr. R. Valente for her interesting remarks on the dating of Matt-Painted ware.

⁹⁰ On the ‘Protogeometric’ group see Stillwell MacKay 1967, 285–8; Sanders 1993, 275; cf. Bakourou *et al.* 2003, 235. See also Oikonomou-Laniado 1997, 237, fig. 3.

⁹¹ First Venetian occupation: 1388–1540 (Nauplio) / 1394–1463 (Argos); first Ottoman occupation: 1463 (Argos) / 1540 (Nauplio)–1686; second Venetian occupation: 1686–1715; second Ottoman occupation: 1715–1822. See Lambrynidis 2001, 54–195; Zenginis 1968, 198–213; Jameson *et al.* 1994, 123–39; Piérart and Touchais 1996, 96–101; Topping 2000, 28–40; Liata 2002; 2003; 2017; Maltezou and Panopoulou 2010; Vassiliou 2013, 221–22; Kondylis 2016.

⁹² See Lambrynidis 2001, 196–326; Zenginis 1968, 213–72; Piérart and Touchais 1996, 102–9.

⁹³ On Post-Byzantine Monochrome or Colored Sgraffito Ware, see Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999, 23–4; Bormpoudaki 2007, 36–48. We should mention that the other sherd resembles *graffita arcaica* in its outer surface treatment, though in its decoration it resembles the Post-Byzantine Colored Sgraffito Ware.

⁹⁴ See Yangaki 2012, 103–8, 119–32; Vassiliou 2017, 335–9, table 2.

⁹⁵ Hahn 1996, 434.

⁹⁶ It is mostly found at the Akronauplia castle, but also in ‘Psaromachalas’ (The Fishermen’s Neighborhood) and in the lower city, see Vassiliou 2017, 342, fig. 15; on Akronauplia see also Yangaki 2012, 110, 151 no. 91, figs. 80–1.

characterized by a blue tin glaze in various tones for the ground and darker blue for the decoration.⁹⁷ It had a long production period, from the mid-16th to the 19th century; no. 22 can be dated to the 17th century. There is also a small fragment of an open vessel, tin-glazed in dark blue, which could be *maiolica turchina* or dark blue maiolica, dating to around the late 16th or the 17th century.⁹⁸ However, due to its extremely fragmentary state, the identification remains hypothetical.

From the late 17th or early 18th century, there is a small bowl fragment of Late Maiolica from central Italy, decorated with a typical vegetal motif in a variety of colors (cat. no. 23; Fig. 27).⁹⁹ These bowls were a popular product of the time; likewise they are well represented in Argolis (Nauplio, Argos, Kastri/Ermioni immured at the church of the Taxiarches).¹⁰⁰ Yet, popular 17th-century Italian wares such as *marmorizzata* and *graffita tarda*, which were so common at Nauplio,¹⁰¹ or Ottoman wares such as Iznik,¹⁰² are absent from our assemblage.

No. 24 belongs to a closed vessel decorated with a spiral motif in dark green glaze (Fig. 28). This ware, dated to the late 16th or 17th century, is known as Green Painted Ware.¹⁰³ In Argolis it is found at Nauplio, Argos and Asini.¹⁰⁴ As for the Chonika sherd, judging by its manufacture, a later dating to the 17th or early 18th century could be proposed.

There are several sherds ascribed to the 18th–19th century which belong to typical glazed wares of their time, such as Marbled Ware with its characteristic decoration imitating marble veining (cat. no. 25; Fig. 29a, b). These ceramics were manufactured in several places, such as Didymoteicho and Ganos.¹⁰⁵ Marbled ware was common at Argos and Nauplio,¹⁰⁶ and was also found in the Limnes area,¹⁰⁷ while an immured plate decorates the belfry of the post-medieval church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Plataniti.¹⁰⁸

Other typical wares originate from the famous Ottoman workshops of Kütahya and Çanakkale. No. 26 is a small cup fragment possibly from Kütahya (Fig. 30). These small handleless cups, which clearly imitate Chinese porcelain, were high-quality products intended for coffee drinking.¹⁰⁹ No. 27 is a typical fragment of Çanakkale Ware with the characteristic decoration in manganese dark brown color depicting stylized vegetal motifs (Fig. 31).¹¹⁰ No. 28, which bears

⁹⁷ On *maiolica berettina* also known in the bibliography as 'blue on blue maiolica', see Beltrán de Heredia Bercero and Miró i Alaix 2010, 31–50; Skartsis 2012, 77; Yangaki 2012, 109.

⁹⁸ On this ware see Skartsis 2012, 75. On some probable specimens from Nauplio see Vassiliou 2017, 339–40, fig. 10.

⁹⁹ On various Late Maiolica types see Skartsis 2012, 78–80. On an almost intact parallel from Monemvasia see Bormpoudaki 2007,¹⁰⁹ no. 67 (Y. Skagkou).

¹⁰⁰ On Nauplio see Vassiliou 2017, 342, fig. 16. The rest are unpublished.

¹⁰¹ See Vassiliou 2017, 340–1, figs. 13–4.

¹⁰² For specimens from Nauplio see Yangaki 2012, 173–8, 179–82 nos. 138–45, figs. 119–25; Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 264 no. 426 (A. Vassiliou).

¹⁰³ Skartsis 2012, 63–6.

¹⁰⁴ Unpublished specimens.

¹⁰⁵ Bakirtzis 1980, 151, figs. 28–9; Armstrong and Günenin 1995, 185 (nos. 19–21, figs. 4–5), 200; Vroom 2005, 164–65; Kontogiannis 2015, 176–78, with further bibliography.

¹⁰⁶ Unpublished pottery. On a single published example from the ancient Agora of Argos see Daux 1968, 1003, fig. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Hahn 1996, 412 nos. 157–8, fig. 99; 413 no. 167, fig. 102; 434 (only pottery drawings are given).

¹⁰⁸ For a brief mention of the church, which lies close to the Transfiguration of the Savior in the same village, see Bakourou *et al.* 1997. I thank my colleague Dr. Georgios Tsekes for sending me a photo of this vessel.

¹⁰⁹ On Kütahya Ware see Hayes 1992, 266–8; Vroom 1996, esp. 9–11; Vroom 2005, 168–9; Bormpoudaki 2007, 28–9 & 166–7 nos. 124–5 (Y. Skagkou). On some specimens from Nauplio and Argos see Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 259–60 nos. 419, 420a–c (A. Vassiliou).

¹¹⁰ On Çanakkale Ware see Hayes 1992, 268–70; Korre-Zografou 2000; Vroom 2005, 180–3; Bormpoudaki 2007, 29–31, 173 no. 131 (P. Lykou). On Argos and Nauplio see Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 264–5 nos. 427–9 (A. Vassiliou).

a simple slip-painted decoration known as Drip-Painted (Fig. 32), could also be attributed to the Çanakkale production.¹¹¹ This ware is dated to the late 18th to early 19th century and is a common find at Nauplio and Argos. Tobacco pipes are represented by a single specimen, possibly dated to the same period (cat. no. 29; Fig. 33).¹¹²

Eighteenth-nineteenth-century Italian wares are well represented in the Chonika assemblage; seven fragments of Polychrome Painted Maiolica have been found, three of them belonging to the Grottaglie production (cat. no. 30; Fig. 34).¹¹³ Similar dishes and jugs were a common merchandise of their time.¹¹⁴

Despite lacunae or the commonality of some specimens, it should be noted that these late wares of the 17th–19th century in the present assemblage, such as *maiolica berettina*, Late Maiolica, Marbled, Kütahya, Çanakkale, and Polychrome Painted Maiolica Wares, are rarely found together in the rural settlements of Argolis.

Apart from the pottery, other excavation finds include a small glass bottle perhaps of the 18th or even 19th century (Fig. 35),¹¹⁵ a gilded ring of the Late- or Post-Byzantine period, a part of a copper-alloy Gospel cover and a copper-alloy lamp of the same period (Fig. 36).¹¹⁶

DISCUSSION

The Chonika assemblage displays a diversity of wares (Chart 2), encompassing a wide chronological span from at least the 10th to the 19th century, with variations from one period to another, especially during the period from the late 14th to the late 17th century (Chart 1).

The chafing dish (cat. no. 1) could be connected with the existence of an earlier church in the 9th–10th century, only evidenced so far by the fragmentary dedicatory inscription (Fig. 3). In fact Demetrios Athanasoulis finds a connection between this earlier church and St. Peter, Bishop of Argos, one of the most luminous figures of the Argolic Church during the early 10th century, intriguing.¹¹⁷ As for the glazed white ware fragment (cat. no. 2), it constitutes an extremely rare find in rural Argolis. All in all both finds are important, taking into account the scarcity of archaeological evidence from this period, even in Argos and Nauplio.

The pottery of the 12th–early 13th century shows close affinities with Argos and Nauplio, as is only to be expected given that the latter were the major Argolic centers of the time (esp. Argos), and perhaps with Corinth too (e.g. cat. nos. 1, 3), the major center of the northeastern Peloponnese. Furthermore, the presence of glazed pottery from the major workshops of the Late Comnenian period (cat. nos. 5–8) indicates some connection with the trans-regional commerce, either directly or perhaps through the city of Argos.¹¹⁸ In any case, the pottery evidence reflects Chonika's prosperity during the 12th century, a state of affairs previously mainly con-

¹¹¹ See Böhlendorf-Arslan 2002. Drip-Painted Ware was also produced at Didymoteicho, see Bakirtzis 1980, 151, fig. 27.

¹¹² Robinson 1985, 164, 178 nos. C35–C37, pls. 50–1.

¹¹³ On this ware see Vroom 2005, 166–7, 184–5; Bormpoudaki 2007, 133–4 nos. 91–4 (S. Germanidou); 135 no. 95 (Y. Skagkou).

¹¹⁴ On Nauplio see Vassiliou 2017, 342–3, fig. 18.

¹¹⁵ On the dating I am indebted to Dr. Anastassios Ch. Antonaras.

¹¹⁶ The metal finds will be published by Dr. Susanne Metaxas, whom I warmly thank for sharing her initial observations. On the lamp see Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 212 no. 339c (S. Metaxas).

¹¹⁷ Athanasoulis (in Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 102 no. 103) hypothesizes that the letters "...POC" of the dedicatory inscription might be read as [ΠΕΤ]POC. On the life of St. Peter see Kyriakopoulos 1976; for further bibliography see Vassiliou 2013, 222 n. 5. St. Peter is today the patron saint of Argos and he is commemorated on 3rd May.

¹¹⁸ As we have mentioned, Chonika was situated at a strategic point on the road that linked Corinth with Argos ('Kontoporeia').

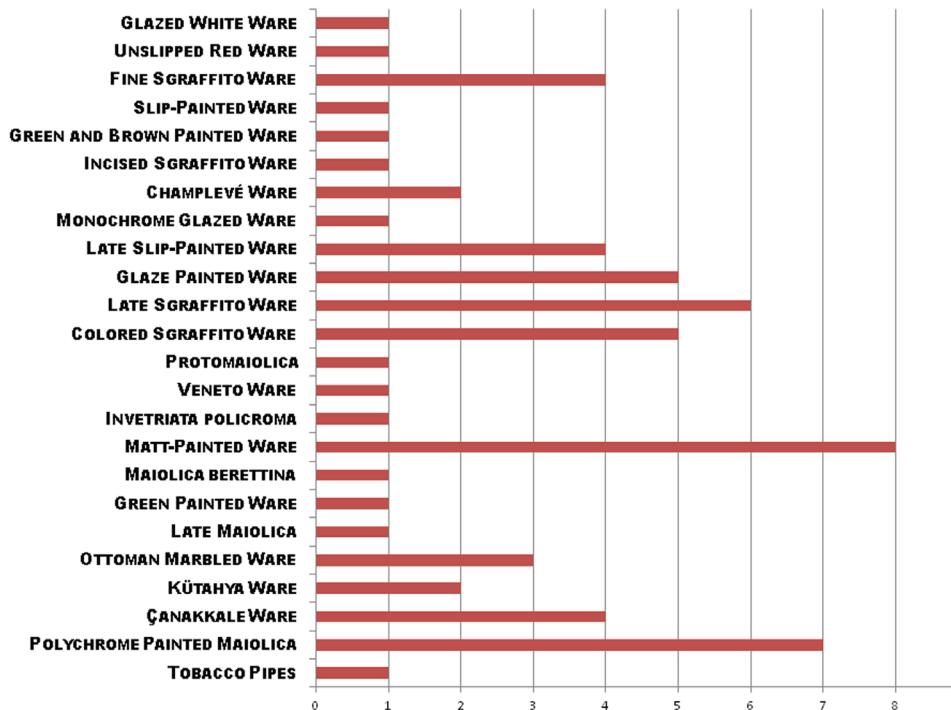


Chart 2. Frequency of the diagnostic wares in the Chonika assemblage.

firmed by Argos and Nauplio. This prosperity is also reflected in the erection of the Chonika church and of other significant churches in the vicinity: the Transfiguration of the Savior at Plataniti¹¹⁹ and Ayia Sotira at Anyphi.¹²⁰

The majority of our diagnostic specimens date to the 13th–early 14th century (Chart 1), when the region was occupied by the Franks, indicating the continuing prosperity of the area. This must have had some bearing on the construction of the neighboring monumental church of Merbaka.¹²¹ In this period local wares predominate, more especially in the ex-Byzantine territories with the emergence of numerous local workshops producing ceramics of mediocre

¹¹⁹ According to Georgios Tsekes (2009, esp. 167–8), the church of Plataniti would have served as a small funerary chapel, dating to around the early 11th century, while its upper structure must have been rebuilt in the 12th century, at a time close to the date of the Chonika church. A similar dating (initial church: 11th century, rebuilding: 12th century) has been proposed by Gisèle Hadji-Minaglou (1998, 223). On the church see also Bouras and Boura 2002, 266–8 with earlier bibliography.

¹²⁰ Only the lower walls survive from the original church of Ayia Sotira, dated by Hadji-Minaglou (1994, 165) to around the mid-12th century, see also Hadjiminaglou 1984; Bouras and Boura 2002, 76 with earlier bibliography. In the wider region of Argolis there are significant 12th-century churches such as Ayios Ioannis Eleimon at Ligourio, the katholikon of the Areia Monastery (1143–1149) and the Panayia at the Larisa castle of Argos (1174), see Bouras and Boura 2002, 79–85, 212–4, 262–3; Athanasoulis 2016, 89–91.

¹²¹ On the church's dating in the late 13th century, which was a major subject of dispute for decades among scholars of Byzantine architecture, see Bouras and Boura 2002, 332–3; Sanders 2015, esp. 590–4. Initially the church was dated to the 12th century see Struck 1909, 233 (ca. 1140); Megaw 1931–1932, 129 (last quarter of the 12th century) and Megaw 1964–1965, 148 (around 1200); Hadji-Minaglou 1992, 132 (same dating as Hagia Moni or slightly later). Apparently the monument has not ceased to intrigue scholars, cf. Stillwell MacKay 2003, 417 n. 97, who notes: "... it could be argued that the church was started much earlier and was only finished in the late 13th century, perhaps by William of Meerbeke". On the Latin archbishop of Corinth Willem van Moerbeke (1278–1286) and his connection with the church of Merbaka see Sanders 2015, with earlier bibliography; see also Coulson 2013.

quality, possibly due to the void left by the large workshops of the Late Comnenian period.¹²² Furthermore their distribution even to rural areas is the norm for this period. On the other hand, Middle Byzantine high-quality glazed ceramics were replaced from the mid-13th century onwards by a new product for the area, the Italian wares (especially maiolica). Despite the limited number in the assemblage (cat. nos. 17–9), these examples are important, as they are rarely found outside the two major centers of Argolis.

The striking scarcity of pottery evidence from the mid-/late 14th to the late 17th century (Chart 1), roughly coinciding the first Venetian, the first Ottoman and the second Venetian occupation, indicates a sort of decline in (or even depopulation of) the area around the church and perhaps the settlement, while the church itself seems to have been in poor condition. Typical 15th- and 16th-century Italian wares such as the 'ladder medallion' jugs, *maioliche* or *grafite rinascimentali*, so common at Nauplio, are absent from Chonika. The picture in Argos and the neighboring areas of Prosymni and Limnes is similar.¹²³ To some extent we could connect this scarcity to the great plague that had affected the Peloponnese by 1347 and the turbulent period of 1388–1397 with constant warfare between Venice and the Duchy of Athens, the Despotate of Morea and soon after the Ottoman Empire, which reached its culmination in 1397 with the sacking of Argos and part of rural Argolis by the Ottomans.¹²⁴ The continuity of pottery evidence and the fact that it is plentiful for this extremely agitated period in neighboring Nauplio cannot be coincidental and could be linked with the fact that the city was better protected. Be that as it may, the Chonika assemblage contains no more than six sherds that can be dated to between the late 14th and the late 17th century (Chart 1). In any case, the wall-paintings of the prothesis of the Merbaka church, dated by Mary Lee Coulson to the late 14th or the early 15th century,¹²⁵ and a *graffita rinascimentale* bowl featuring a female bust found in the precincts of the Transfiguration of the Savior at Plataniti and dated to the late 15th–early 16th century,¹²⁶ imply that life beyond subsistence did not come to an end in the settlements of the Argolic plain during this agitated period.

During the 18th–early 19th century, i.e. the period of the brief second Venetian and the second Ottoman occupation, the pottery data is more representative (Chart 1), pointing to a revival of the church and perhaps the settlement. The pottery evidence is characterized by the variety of glazed wares (cat. nos. 23–8, 30), both Ottoman (among them products of Kütahya and Çanakkale) and Italian (mostly products of southern Italy, especially Grottaglie), as well as local ones, displaying a certain local affluence. As we have seen, both the church and the settlement are mentioned in the Venetian archives of 1696 and 1700. We should also recall that the restoration of the upper part of the church may have taken place during this period.

If we compare the present assemblage with the finds from the Transfiguration of the Savior at Plataniti,¹²⁷ Ayios Ioannis Theologos at Ligourio,¹²⁸ or the Byzantine church at Lalioteika/Ano Epidavros¹²⁹, the former emerges as quite distinctive. With the exception of the Byzantine church at Lalioteika, where the few glazed sherds were mostly Middle Byzantine, the afore-

¹²² See Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999, 21; Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2003, 63–4. See nos. 11–2, 14–16 in the present assemblage.

¹²³ Hahn 1996, 434: "..., Period IV [ca. 1400–1700] exhibits a decline in the amount of finds".

¹²⁴ Many inhabitants ended up in captivity; the depopulation was such that the Venetians brought Albanians to revive the area, see Luttrell 1966, 49; Panagiotopoulos 1987, 61–8, 59–61, 68–100, 102–4; Kondylis 2010, 37–8, with further bibliography; Velioti-Georgopoulos 2016, 252.

¹²⁵ See Coulson 2013.

¹²⁶ Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 251 no. 405 (A. Vassiliou); Vassiliou 2017, 338–9, fig. 8. Diana Wright (2014) suggests that the Plataniti church could have belonged to a fief.

¹²⁷ Tsekes 2009, 169.

¹²⁸ Vassiliou 2009, 302–3.

¹²⁹ Oikonomou 1989, 307; Vassiliou 2016, 275 no. 44.

mentioned churches produced pottery mostly of a late date, with far fewer wares, especially glazed ones of inferior quality. Even at Merbaka, where a significant number of immured vessels decorated the outer facades of the church, the glazed sherds found in the area around the church in 1998 were not very numerous and were mostly of a late date.¹³⁰

Another aspect that emerges from the study of the assemblage is that it shows stronger affinities with neighboring Argos, taking into account the absence of late 14th- to late 16th-century Italian pottery. This is to some extent to be expected, since Chonika is relatively close to Argos, situated on a main road that connected the latter with Corinth. Furthermore, we know from the Venetian archives that during the second Venetian occupation Chonika belonged to the *territorio di Argos* and later during the second Ottoman occupation to the *kaza* of Argos.¹³¹

The quality of some specimens like the glazed white ware sherd (cat. no. 2), the chafing dish (cat. no. 1), the Middle Byzantine glazed pottery of the large workshop(s) (cat. nos. 5–8), or the Italian and Ottoman wares (cat. nos. 17–9, 22–3, 25–8, 30), reflects a certain eclecticism and makes this a unique assemblage outside Argos and Nauplio. We do not know whether these ceramics were used by the clergy of the church or even by monks if the church actually belonged to a monastery. However, the assemblage does not contain clay specimens with an obvious liturgical function (e.g. censers, chalices, or vessels with liturgical inscriptions), as is the case for example with a chalice found in the crypt of the Merbaka church.¹³² Then again we should not altogether exclude the possibility that some of them served liturgical purposes.¹³³ We should also bear in mind that other important assemblages connected with churches or monasteries included glazed and coarse pottery but with no specific traits indicating liturgical use.¹³⁴

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Studying an assemblage entails confronting a number of challenges, normally including various limitations regarding its quantity, quality and field documentation. However, its value is self-evident, and such an assemblage constitutes a primary archaeological source.

The Chonika assemblage stands out from other known assemblages from rural medieval and post-medieval Argolis by virtue of its quality and the extended period represented by its constituents. Actually it confirms the significance of the church, which is to be expected given its monumentality and high level of architectural craftsmanship.

The greater number of sherds from the Comnenian and Frankish periods (12th–early 14th century) seem to confirm the prosperity of the area, as is further indicated by the construction

¹³⁰ See Gérolymou 1999, 540. It should be noted that four excavations have taken place so far at the church of the Panaya in Merbaka (incl. that of 1998), see Gérolymou 1999, 531.

¹³¹ See Liata 2003. The village is still part of the administrative area of Argos to this day.

¹³² On this vessel see Athanasoulis and Vassiliou 2016, 119 no. 131 (I.D. Varalas).

¹³³ We should keep in mind that some of the excavation finds, mainly of the Late and Post-Byzantine periods, have a direct connection with the church, such as the Gospel cover, the copper-alloy lamp and the wall-painting fragments, which suggest that some of the vessels in the assemblage could have been used by the clergy (or the monks).

¹³⁴ See Hahn 1996, 437, who concludes in relation to the Prosymni–Limnes survey: "... based on the associated finds it has not been possible in the survey area to distinguish a church site from a settlement". See also Gerstel et al. 2003, 181–4 nos. 42–54, 220–1, on the ceramics (especially glazed ones) without specific liturgical character found in the church of a rural settlement at Panakton/Boeotia (mid 14th–first decades of the 15th century), and Papanikola-Bakirtzi and Zekos 2007, 13, 37–8, 48–9, 105–27 on Thracian monastic centers at Synaxi in Maroneia (9th–13th centuries) and Mt Papikion (Middle–Late Byzantine period), where Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi comments that the monastic communities used the same glazed vessels as those found in secular contexts. That does not, of course, exclude the existence of certain vessels with obvious ecclesiastical affinities, see for example a ceramic with incised cross from Mt Papikion dated to the 13th century in Papanikola-Bakirtzi and Zekos 2007, 109 no. 106 (N. Zekos).

of significant churches on a monumental scale in the vicinity and, of course, the church of the Panayia itself. On the other hand, the sharp decrease in the pottery evidence between the late 14th and the late 17th century might reflect to some extent the turbulent epoch known from the sources.¹³⁵ The 18th–19th century data seems to indicate a certain stability in the area.

The crucial issue regarding the owners of the ceramics must remain unanswered in the absence of further evidence. Yet the adoption of ‘mainstream wares’ alongside local ones over a relatively long period suggests the existence of a distinct nucleus, whether ecclesiastical, monastic or secular, apparently connected with the adjacent church.

CATALOGUE¹³⁶

1. (Fig. 5a, b). Chafing dish. Small upper body and rim fragment. Unslipped Glazed Red Ware. Pres. H. 4.65; Diam. of rim 17.8. Brick-red fabric, 10R 5/6, coarse, very hard. Oblique outer walls, double lip. Int.: Dark olive-brown glaze to over lip outside. Ext.: Incised wavy line below lip. 10th (–early 11th) century. Vassiliou 2016, 268 no. 14, fig. 15a, b.
2. (Fig. 6a, b). Cup (?). Small upper body and rim fragment. Glazed White Ware. Pres. H. 2.95; Diam. of rim 8. Gritty white fabric. Very thin (0.3), almost vertical walls, plain rim. Dark green mottled glaze on both sides. Second half of the 11th (–early 12th) century.
3. (Fig. 7a, b). Open vessel. Base and lower body fragment. Fine Sgraffito Ware. Pres. H. 2.1; pres. W. 6.2. Light red fabric, 2.5 YR 6/6, with some black and white inclusions; pores. Low ring base. Int.: Thick white slip; central medallion with double ring in deeper incision representing the back of an animal with its tail in finer incision; almost colorless (slightly green) glaze. Ext.: Light brown wash. Second quarter–mid-12th century.
4. (Fig. 8a, b). Small bowl, partly preserved. Fine Sgraffito Ware. H. 6.2; Diam. of base 5.3; Diam. of rim 14.5. Light red fabric, 2.5 YR 6/8, with some medium white and red inclusions. Low ring base with small conical projection, curved walls, plain rim. White slip and green glaze on the interior to over lip outside; ochre white wash on the exterior. Int.: Central medallion and band below lip with spirals in extremely fine and shallow incision. Mid- to third quarter of 12th century.
5. (Fig. 9a, b). Dish, partly preserved. Fine Sgraffito Ware. H. 4.2; Diam. of base 11.5; Diam. of rim 21. Red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/6, with some white inclusions. Very low ring base, almost horizontal walls turning to form an almost vertical rim. Int.: Thick white slip to over lip outside; traces of central medallion with spiral (?) motif, band with sketchy zig-zag lines, all in medium incision; yellowish glaze to over lip outside. Ext.: Thinner white slip. Third quarter of 12th century.
6. (Fig. 10). Open vessel. Two small body fragments. Slip-Painted Ware – Light on Dark II. Red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/8, with some medium and large white inclusions. Int.: Scrolls made with white slip; brown glaze. Ext.: White wash. Third quarter of 12th century.
7. (Fig. 11a, b). Dish partly preserved. Incised Sgraffito Ware – Free Style. H. 4.2; Diam. of base 9.03; Diam. of rim 22.2. Red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/8, with some white inclusions; pores. Ring base, slightly curved walls, plain rim. Int.: Thick white slip to over lip outside; quadruped turned

¹³⁵ However, we should keep in mind that making a direct connection between pottery evidence and history could lead to overly simplistic and misleading results. Moreover, the written sources for Argolis in medieval and post-medieval periods are scant and fragmentary (not unlike its material evidence). There is always a risk of over-emphasizing some pottery evidence that seems to coincide with written sources, while other valuable evidence is ignored due to the lack of written or material documentation.

¹³⁶ All measurements are in centimeters. Maximum preserved dimensions are given. Abbreviations: Diam. = diameter, Dim. = dimensions, H. = height, L. = length, pres. = preserved, W. = width. All the drawings of pottery are by the author.

to the right rendered in deep incision, typical Free Style motifs around; yellowish green glaze. Ext.: White wash; yellowish green glaze. Last quarter of 12th–first quarter of 13th century.

8. (Fig. 12). Bowl. Two body fragments. Champlevé Ware. Pres. L. 4.9; pres. W. 10.5. Red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/6, with small–medium white inclusions; pores. Int.: Thick white slip; central medallion with a rabbit turned to the right; shiny, thick yellowish-green glaze. Ext.: Traces of white wash; shiny brownish glaze. First quarter of 13th century.
9. (Fig. 13a, b). Small bowl partly preserved. Green and Brown Painted Ware III. H. 4.6. Diam. of base 6.3; Diam. of rim 13.3. Reddish brown fabric, 2.5 YR 5/6-5/8, gritty, with frequent white and dark red inclusions; frequent pores. Low ring base, oblique walls, plain rim. Int.: Thick white slip to over lip outside; traces of central motif with curved lines, band around rim (inside and out), all with green glaze; without covering glaze. Ext.: Grey wash due to overheating. Last quarter of 12th–first quarter of 13th century.
10. (Fig. 14). Cooking pots. Body fragments with handle. Unglazed Coarse Ware. Handle W. 2.4-2.88. Red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/6, coarse, with small medium and large white inclusions. Strap handles. Ext.: Horizontal combed decoration on the shoulder. Traces of burning owing to use. Second half of 12th–mid-13th century.
11. (Fig. 15). Open vessel. Small body fragment. Late Sgraffito Ware. Pres. L. 4.3; pres. W. 5.6. Same fabric as no. 9. Int.: Ocher white slip; incised chevron motif in vertical arrangement; dark green glaze. Ext.: Ocher brownish wash. 13th century.
12. (Fig. 16). Open vessel. Base and lower body fragment. Late Sgraffito Ware. Pres. H. 3.8; pres. W. 7.9. Same fabric as no. 9. Conical base. Int.: Thick white slip; male (warrior?) figure turned to the left; brown glaze. Ext.: Thinner white slip. 13th century.
13. (Fig. 17). Open vessel. Base and body fragment. Late Sgraffito Ware. Pres. H. 4.68; Diam. of base 6.6. Red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/6, with white inclusions. Ring base. Int.: Thick white slip; three incised concentric circles; shiny yellow-green glaze. Ext.: Pinkish wash. 13th century.
14. (Fig. 18). Open vessel. Two rim fragments. Colored Sgraffito Ware. Pres. L. 3.3; pres. W. 6.1. Same fabric as no. 9. Oblique walls, plain rim. Thick white slip and colorless glaze on the interior to over lip outside, white wash on the rest of exterior. Int.: Linear motifs rendered mainly in deep incision enriched with brown glaze. 13th century.
15. (Fig. 19). Bowl. Two upper body and rim fragments. Late Slip-Painted Ware. Pres. H. 4.6; Diam. of rim 16.5. Same fabric as no. 9. Curved walls, plain rim. Int.: Small circles of white slip; dark green glaze to over lip outside. 13th century.
16. (Fig. 20a, b). Open vessel (bowl?). Base and lower body fragment. Glaze Painted Ware. Pres. H. 2.7; Diam. of base 8.1. Light brown fabric, 5 YR 6/4, pores. Low ring base. Int.: Thin whitish(?) slip; elementary decoration with dark green strokes; greenish yellow glaze. Hole at the bottom made in a later phase. 13th century.
17. (Fig. 21). Dish. Small rim fragment. Protomaiolica salentina. Pres. L. 2.6; pres. W. 2.3. Whitish fabric, 7.5 YR 8/2. Int.: Thin layer of white tin glaze to over lip outside, two black lines in the upper part of a band with blue chevron motif. Third quarter of 13th century.
18. (Fig. 22). Bowl. Small rim fragment. Invetriata policroma. Pres. L. 2.7; pres. W. 3.68. Ocher white fabric, 10 YR 8/2. Int.: Linear decoration in red, blue and dark brown; colorless lead glaze. Ext.: Colorless lead glaze. 14th–15th(?) century.
19. (Fig. 23). Bowl. Base and lower body fragment. Veneto Ware. Pres. H. 2.3; Diam. of base 5.6. Dark red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/8-4/8, with frequent tiny sparkling inclusions. Low ring-base with small conical projection on its underside. Brown glaze all over, except the base (more sketchily applied on the exterior). Traces of tripod stilts on the interior. Late 13th–early 14th century.
20. (Fig. 24a–c). Closed vessels. Small fragments. Matt-Painted Ware.
a: Spout. 'Protogeometric' group. Pres. L. 3.8, Diam. 2.2. Fine, orange-red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/8,

with white and sparkling inclusions. Linear decoration with black slip on the exterior. Second half of 12th-early 13th century.

b: Small body fragment. Pres. Dim. 3.2 x 3.9. Coarse, light reddish brown fabric, 5 YR 6/4. Thick walls (1.1). Ext.: Decoration with white cross-hatching on a brown background (probably in the form of a band). Late 12th-13th century.

c: Body fragment. Pres. L. 5.4; pres. W. 4.1. Coarse, light brown fabric, 5 YR 7/4, with many medium black inclusions. Linear decoration with black slip on the exterior. Second half of 13th century.

21. (Fig. 25). Open vessel. Base and lower body fragment. Colored Sgraffito Ware. Pres. H. 3.7; Diam. of base 12.5. Red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/6, with some small-medium white and sparkling inclusions. Low ring base. Int.: Whiteish wash and light green glaze; hasty decoration with linear incised motifs and splashes of green and brown glaze. Ext.: Ocher brown wash. 15th (-16th) century.
22. (Fig. 26). Open vessel. Three body fragments. Maiolica berettina. Soft, ocher white/yellowish fabric, 10 YR 8/3. Light blue (with a purplish tint) tin glaze on both sides. Decoration in darker blue on the exterior. 17th century.
23. (Fig. 27). Bowl. Small body fragment. Late Maiolica. Pres. L. 2.5; pres. W. 3.8. Pinkish brown fabric, 7.5 YR 8/4. Thick white tin glaze on both sides. Int.: Polychrome painted decoration with vegetal and linear motifs. Late 17th-early 18th century.
24. (Fig. 28). Closed vessel. Body fragment. Green Painted Ware. Pres. L. 5.6; pres. W. 5.9. Ocher white fabric, 10 YR 8/3. Curved walls. Ext.: Curved lines in dark green glaze and thin colorless glaze in the decorated area, partly overfired. 17th-early 18th century.
25. (Fig. 29a, b). Open vessel. Base and lower body fragment. Marbled Ware. Pres. H. 2.15; Diam. of base 9. Fine red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/8, with sparkling inclusions. Low ring base. Thick white slip and olive green glaze all over (except for the interior of the base). Int.: 'marbled' decoration in dark brown. 18th-early 19th century.
26. (Fig. 30). Cup. Small upper body and rim fragment. Kütahya Ware. Pres. L. 1.7; pres. W. 1.8. Pinkish fabric, 7.5 YR 8/3. Thin (0.3), almost vertical walls, plain rim. White slip and colorless glaze on both sides. Monochrome decoration in blue on the exterior, simple line below lip on the interior. 18th century.
27. (Fig. 31). Small dish. Body fragment and small part of lip. Çanakkale Ware. Pres. L. 4.7; pres. W. 7.8. Red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/6. Curved walls, horizontal rim. Int.: Thick white slip; vegetal decoration (probably a whirling rosette) in black-brown color; colorless glaze. Ext.: Splashes of white slip. Late 18th-early 19th century.
28. (Fig. 32). Dish. Small upper body and rim fragment. Drip-Painted Ware. Pres. H. 3.45; pres. W. 4.9. Fine red fabric, 2.5 YR 5/6-4/6, with sparkling inclusions. Folded lip outside. Int.: Dripped white slip; green glaze to over lip outside. Ext.: Ocher brown wash. Late 18th-early 19th century.
29. (Fig. 33). Tobacco pipe. Shank and part of the bowl. Pres. L. 4; pres. W. 2.2. Fine dark red fabric, 2.5 YR 4/6. Faceted shank with wreath. Ext.: Fine red slip. Late 18th-first half of 19th century.
30. (Fig. 34). Dish. Small rim fragment. Polychrome Painted Maiolica (Grottaglie Ware). Pres. L. 2.5; pres. W. 4.45. Ocher white fabric, 10 YR 8/4, gritty. Horizontal rim. Thick white tin glaze on both sides. Int.: Blue rosette in a band outlined in dark brown. 19th century.

PROVENANCE OF FIGURES

Figs. 1, 5-35: ©A. Vassiliou

Figs. 2-4, 36: ©Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolis

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