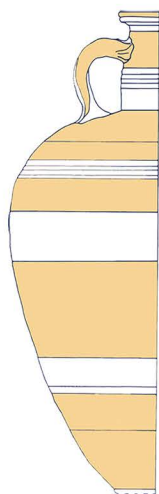




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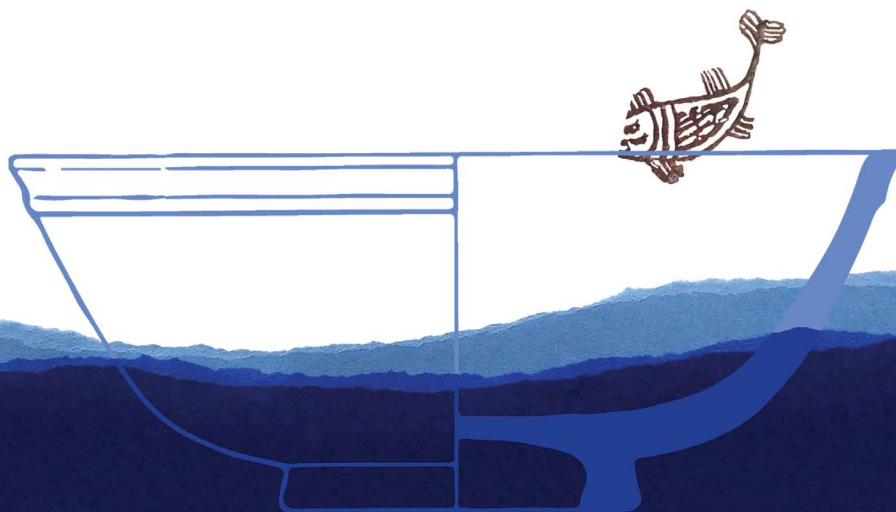
12th Congress AIECM3 On Medieval and Modern Period Mediterranean Ceramics

Proceedings

Edited by

Platon PETRIDIS – Anastasia G. YANGAKI

Nikos LIAROS – Elli-Evangelia BIA



12ο Συνέδριο AIECM3
Μεσαιωνικής και Νεότερης
Κεραμικής της Μεσογείου

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WORD PROCESSING-LAYOUT AND COVER DESIGN
Constantina SIMONETATOU

Διάρθρωση: Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών

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ISBN [vol. II] 978-960-7905-88-8
ISBN [set] 978-960-7905-89-5
ISSN 1108-3840

ISBN [vol. II] 978-960-466-256-2
ISBN [set] 978-960-466-254-8

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THE *BACINI* IN CHURCHES OF THE MESA MANI (PELOPONNESE)

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To the memory of Professor Nikolaos Drandakis,
whose extensive work in Mani
has stimulated research into this area
for the next generations

Abstract

The study presents shortly the evidence relating to the bacini in churches in the region of the Mesa Mani in the Peloponnese, a practice that is most widespread in the area of Oitylo during the Middle and the Late-Byzantine period. Remarks on the different categories of glazed wares, are discussed. Emphasis is given to the various Islamic glazed vessels imported from Egypt and Ifrīqiya or Sicily during the 10th-11th c. and to examples of Byzantine pottery of the 12th-13th c. The bacini in churches in the Mesa Mani constitute so far the earliest examples of immured vessels in Greece.

Introduction

Although A.H.S. Megaw (1932-1933: 148-149), G. Velenis (1984: 268, 270-271), N. Drandakis (1972: 279; 1990: 122, 131; 1998: 283, 286, 290, 297, 302, 303-305, 309; Drandakis et al. 1979: 203) and A. Mexia (2011: I. 110-111, 121-125, 229-234) briefly commented on the immured vessels in churches of the Mesa Mani, no study has so far attempted to assemble the evidence in order to study the vessels themselves and to highlight them as examples of ceramic art. A review from the latter standpoint has now been undertaken within the framework of the research programme “Immured Vessels in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine churches of Greece: a digital corpus” (Yangaki 2013: 375-384; 2019: 1-18; <https://www.immuredvessels.gr> ; last accessed: May 20, 2019).

Of the three large sections into which the Mani, the western peninsula of Lakonia, is traditionally divided – *Exo* (Outer), *Kato* (Lower) and *Mesa* (Inner) Mani – this paper focuses on that of the latter, lying on the western slopes of the Lower Taygetos mountain, limited to an area of about 190 km² and divided in turn into several local areas (Mexia 2011: 39-41).

The *bacini* in the churches of the Mesa Mani

The bulk of these 23 churches featuring *bacini* are concentrated in the Oitylo area (on more details on

the churches and their correlation with the *bacini*: Yangaki 2021) and date from the Middle-Byzantine period (**Fig. 1, Tab. 1**). The vessels have been studied during systematic field research and are currently preserved *in situ* on the monuments. Of the 124 *bacini*, 79 are still in place. In few of the cases where no vessels survive, the short descriptions provided by Drandakis offer valuable information on the original ceramics (Drandakis 1998: 309, fig. 18). The preserved pieces belong to open vessels, mostly shallow bowls, with rim diameters ranging between 13.5 and 16 cm, and large dishes with a diameter of between 22 and 35 cm. In Taxiarchis in Charouda occur also small vessels with handles (**Fig. 2**), a case with parallels to a *bacino* in San Piero a Grado, Pisa (Berti, Giorgio 2011: 21, no. 8). The largest number of vessels are found in churches of the domed cross-in-square type, while fewer vessels are found in the single-nave, barrel-vaulted churches.

The pottery used as *bacini* falls mainly into two large groups of Islamic and of Byzantine origin, with rare cases of Italian products (from the Ottoman period) and some which could not be identified with certainty due mostly to their poor state of preservation. Of the 33 decorated glazed *bacini* that constitute Islamic products, a few are recognized as Islamic wares of Fatimid Egypt. One, bearing a decoration depicting a bird (Philon 1980: 250;



Tab. 1 Categories - decorative styles of ceramics used as *bacini* in the churches of the Mesa Mani (for those cases where the evidence is still actually preserved¹; on details on the correlation of the *bacini* with the churches: Yangaki 2021).

		Byzantine Wares							Islamic Wares				Italian Wares		Various Wares	
Church	Village/ Area	Slip- painted	Green & Brown Painted	Painted- Sgraffito	Fine Sgraffito	Champlevé	Incised –Sgraffito – Thessaloniki Production	Monochrome Sgraffito with Concentric Circles	Lustre Ware	“Ceramica siculo- maghreбина”	Various “Splashed Wares”, Fatimid Egypt	Other	Marbled Ware	Other	Not id.	Mono- chrome Glazed Wares
Agia Triada	Briki												✓	✓		
Agios Nikolaos	Briki														✓	
Taxiarchis	Charouda									✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Agios Georgios	Episkopi (Koita area)		✓	✓								✓			✓	✓
Agia Varvara	Erimos	✓							✓			✓			✓	
Transfiguration of the Saviour	Gardenitsa (Kato)									✓	✓	✓			✓	
Taxiarches	Glezou									✓	✓	✓			✓	
Agios Petros	Glezou									✓						
Agios Nikolaos	Glezou									✓ ?					✓ ?	
Agios Theodoros	Kalou				✓					✓						
Agios Ioannis	Keria				✓			✓								✓
Sergius and Bacchus	Koita														✓	
Asomatos	Kouloumi											✓				✓
Panagia	Mandoforos						✓									
Agios Nikolaos	Ochia		✓													
Agioi Theodoroi	Vamvaka									✓		✓			✓	

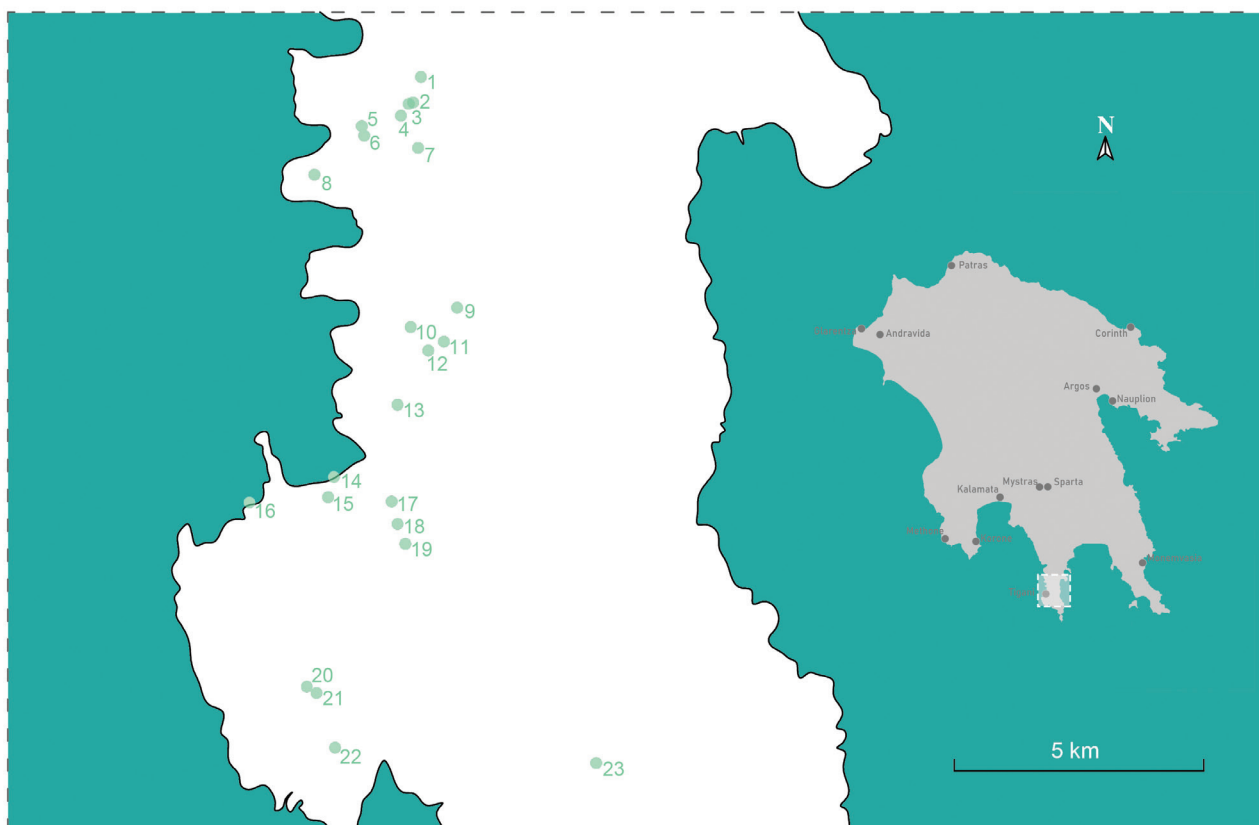


Fig. 1 Schematic map of part of the Mani peninsula with churches bearing *bacini*: 1. Agios Theodoros at “Kalou”; 2. Agios Nikolaos, Glezou; 3. Agia Varvara, Glezou; 4. Taxiarches, Glezou; 5. Agios Vasileios, Mandoforos; 6. Panagia, Mandoforos; 7. Agios Petros, Glezou; 8. Taxiarchis, Charouda; 9. Agioi Theodoroi, Vamvaka; 10. Asomatos, Kouloumi; 11. Agios Nikolaos, Briki; 12. Agia Triada, Briki; 13. Agia Varvara, Erimos; 14. Vlacherna, Near Mezapos; 15. Agios Georgios, Episkopi (Koita area); 16. Agitria, Agia Kyriaki; 17. Transfiguration of the Saviour, Kato Gardenitsa; 18. Agies Maries, Kato Gardenitsa; 19. Sergius and Bacchus, Koita; 20. Asomatos, Keria; 21. Agios Ioannis, Keria; 22. Agios Nikolaos, Ochia; 23. Agia Kyriaki, Marathos (map: D. Tagmatarchi).



Fig. 2 Open vessel with a handle, immured in Taxiarchis at Charouda (photo by the author).

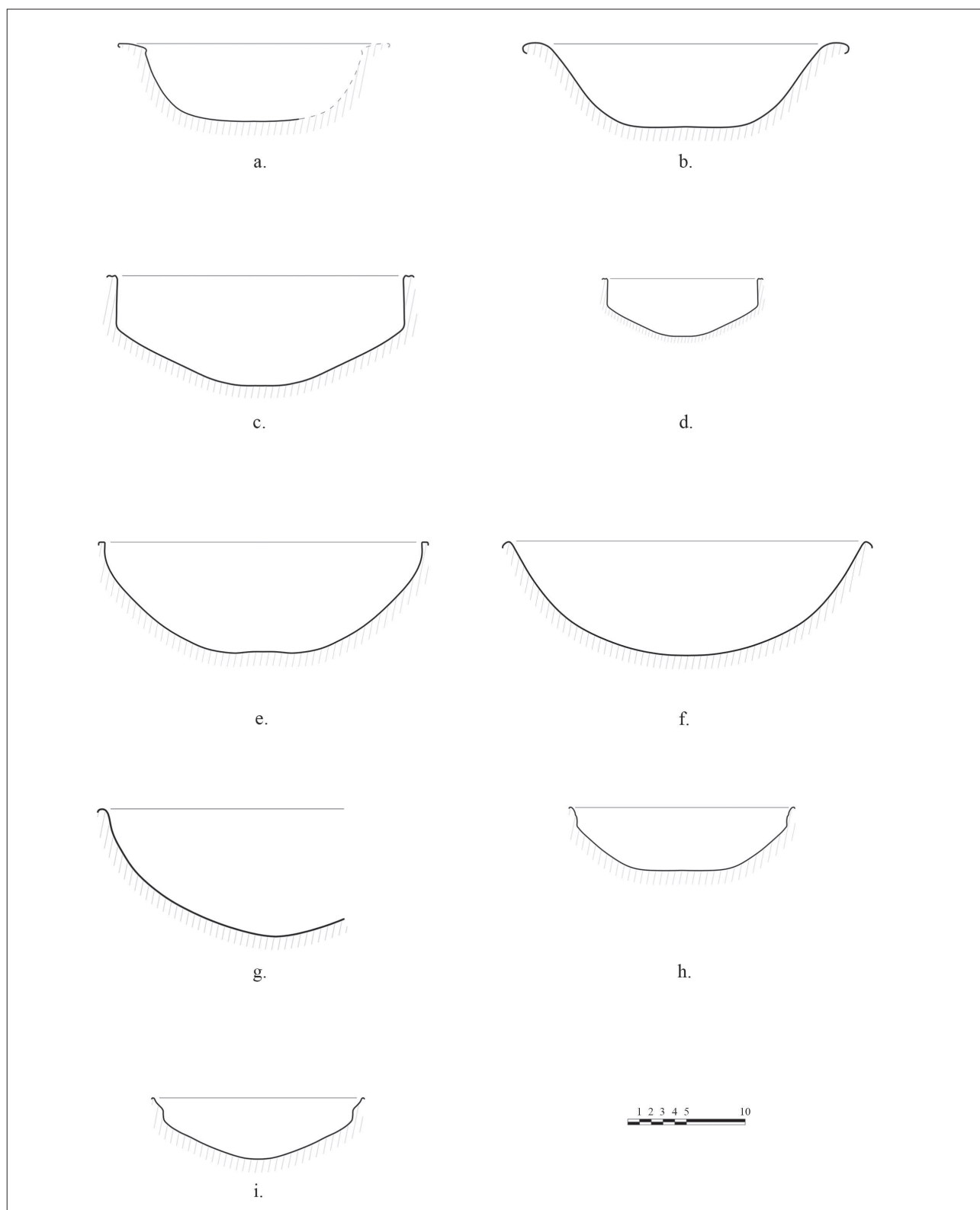


Fig. 3 Sketches of the sections of some of the *bacini*: a.-b.: polychrome painted dishes from Egypt, Taxiarches at Glezou, c.-d.: plates of “invetriate dipinte policrome e bicromea”, Agios Theodoros, Vamvaka, Agios Theodoros, Kalou, e: Green and Brown Painted Ware, Agios Nikolaos, Ochia, f: Slip-Painted Ware, Agia Varvara, Erimos, g: Painted-Sgraffito Ware, Agios Georgios, Episkopi, h.-i.: Monochrome Sgraffito with Concentric Circles, Agios Ioannis, Keria (sketches: A. Yangaki, D. Tagmatarchi).

Watson 2004: 280), once immured in Agia Varvara in Erimos (Drandakis 1998: 309, fig. 18), is an example of lustre pottery (Philon 1980: 176-179; Watson 2004: 53-54, 273) (Fig. 4, I). Various Islamic polychrome “Splashed Wares” (Watson 2004: 36) form a problematic and not homogeneous group of wares of Egyptian origin produced from the 9th until the 12th c. and more commonly known in the bibliography with the misnomer “Fayyumi Ware” (Philon 1980: 35-36, 41; Blake, Aguzzi 1990: 103-106; Scanlon 1993: 295-330; Gayraud 1997: 266, 268; 2011: 298-301; Williams 2013; Gayraud, Vallauri 2017: 24, 27-28; Sacco 2018: 437). Several examples from the Mesa Mani with a buff-coloured fabric and polychrome radial bands belong to various sub-groups. Most find parallels in examples dated to the 11th c. (Fig. 3, a-b; Fig. 4, II.a-d), although few, as those with dabs of colours on an opacified background, seem earlier (10th c.) (Fig. 4, II.e) (Philon 1980: 36, 47, 49, 52; Blake, Aguzzi 1990: 106, 118-119, 125; Gayraud 1997: 267; Gelichi, Nepoti 1999: 207, 213-214; Williams 2013: 155, 160, 165, 167; Gayraud, Vallauri 2017: 27, 29, 226, 261, 362-363).

Several examples form part of the various glazed and painted polychrome productions (“invetriate dipinte policrome e bicrome”), the so-called “ceramica siculo-maghrebina” (Fig. 5, III.a-l), with painted decoration in green and brown, with additional yellow. These productions are attributed to Islamic centres in Sicily (i.e. Palermo) and North Africa (i.e. Šabral-Mansūriyya and Oudhna), and more particular in Ifrīqiya, and date from the late 9th and until the middle of the 13th c. (Blake, Aguzzi 1990: 112-113, 140; Molinari 1995: 191-200; 1997: 375-380; Louhichi 2010: 34-40; Berti, Giorgio 2011: 32-41; Mangiaracina 2013: 89-105; Gragueb Chatti 2013: 318-324; 2015: 259-281; Xhyheri 2015: 367, n. 12; Sacco 2017: 337-366). Most examples from the churches of the Mesa Mani are carinated bowls with a high and thick, characteristic rim (Fig. 3, c-d), a form found in both areas, and date from the 11th c. mainly (Molinari 1995: 200, pl. I, 2; Gragueb Chatti 2015: 261-262, fig. 1). The rich decoration consists either of geometric or vegetal motifs (Fig. 5, III.a-g) (Blake, Aguzzi 1990: 122, 141; Berti, Giorgio 2011: 33, 36; Gragueb Chatti 2013: 327; 2015: 271, fig. 11). Common is the use of spirals, cross-hatchings and interlocking curved bands. It is not easy to link the *bacini* from the

churches of Mani to either the one production region or the other. Nevertheless, for a bowl immured at Agios Theodoros in Vamvaka (Fig. 5, III.e) and a few dishes from the same church and in Taxiarchis at Charouda and in Taxiarches at Glezou (Fig. 5, III.a, c), their provenance from the area of Ifrīqiya seems probable based on similarities with vessels of a similar provenance immured in churches of Pisa (Berti, Giorgio 2011: 36, fig. 50, *bacini* nos 58, 65) and Pavia (Blake, Aguzzi 1990: 122, fig. 16, 141, fig. 38). Furthermore, a large dish immured in the Transfiguration of the Saviour at Gardenitsa (Fig. 5, III.d) has very close similarities in form and decoration with vessels attributed to the production of Sicily (Berti, Giorgio 2011: 33, fig. 47, *bacini* nos 74, 78, 85).

Regarding the Byzantine productions, specific decorative categories are found at particular monuments. Thus, for Middle-Byzantine pottery, two examples at the church of Agia Varvara in Erimos belong to the Slip-Painted decorative category (Fig. 3, f; Fig. 6, I.a-b)². Three deep and large dishes with a diameter of ca. 30 to 35 cm, located in two monuments, can, although their interior is not well preserved, be assigned to the Green and Brown Painted Ware (Fig. 3, e; Fig. 6, II.a-b) and more precisely within Morgan’s Groups II and III, dating within the 12th c. (Morgan 1942: 72-83, pl. XX, b, pl. XXI, b; Sanders 1995: 72-74, 234-237; Vassiliou 2019: 373-398). Fine-Sgraffito (Fig. 6, III.c), Incised-Sgraffito (Fig. 6, III.b) and Painted-Sgraffito (Fig. 6, III.a) are represented by five examples found in three churches (Tab. 1). The Painted-Sgraffito example (Fig. 3, g; Fig. 6, III.a) finds analogies in form and decoration with bowls dating to the end of the 12th c. (Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999: 39). An additional example decorated with the *champlevé* technique, resembling objects dating from the late 12th-early 13th c. (Morgan 1942: 177, fig. 160, a, 313, no. 1479; Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999: 174), was originally embedded in the church of Agia Kyriaki in Marathos (Drandakis et al. 1979: 203, pl. 130, β). Three partially preserved vessels in Panagia in Mandoforos (Fig. 6, IV.a-c) should most probably be ascribed to the production of Thessaloniki in the late 13th-14th c.³, as Mexia has already noted (2008-2009: 138). Most characteristic of the decoration is the partial representation of what originally must have been a bird (Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1999: 191-193, 205, 210). Taking into consideration the dates of these



Fig. 4 Islamic Pottery: I: Islamic lustre ware, Agia Varvara, Erimos, II.a-e: Egyptian “Splashed Wares”: a.-b.: Taxiarches, Gle-zou, c., e.: Taxiarchis, Charouda, d.: Christ the Saviour, Kato Gardenitsa, IV.a.-b.: Monochrome glazed wares of possible Islamic origin: a. Agios Georgios, Episkopi, b.: Asomatos, Kouloumi (photos: I: © Ephorate of Antiquities of Lakonia, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/H.O.C.RE.D.; II.a-e, V.a, IV.a-b: A.G. Yangaki).



Fig. 5 Islamic Pottery: III.a-l: Glazed polychrome painted wares (“*invetriate dipinte policrome e bicrome*”) from Sicily or North Africa: a., l.: Taxiarchis, Charouda, b., h.: Agios Petros, Glezou, d.: Christ the Saviour, Kato Gardenitsa c., e.-g., j.-k.: Agios Theodoros, Vamvaka, i.: Agios Theodoros, Kalou (photos: A.G. Yangaki).

red-fabric Byzantine *bacini* in combination with the monuments they adorn, their insertion in the latter started from the middle-late 12th c. and ended in the late 14th c., that is somehow later from the first two decades of the 12th c., when these groups of Byzantine pottery gradually started to enjoy large-scale production (Sanders 2003: 394; Yangaki 2015: 158-160, 167) (**Tab. 1**).

In addition, several bowls in Agios Ioannis in Keria (**Fig. 7**, IV.a-c) fall within the large group known in the bibliography under various names, i.e. “Late Sgraffito Ware”, “Sgraffito with Concentric Circles” (Sanders 1993: 256-257; Waksman, François 2004-2005: 661-664, 678-679; Yangaki 2012: 54-58; Waksman et al. 2014: 389, 396-398, 414). The examples (**Fig. 3**, h-i) are similar to vessels dated within the 13th c., mostly its later part (Waksman, François 2004-2005: 675-677, 719, fig. 23, BYZ491; Poulou-Papadimitriou 2008: 92, 132; Waksman, Teslenko 2010: 363, fig. 6, 4-5, 372-373).

One of the latest examples of *bacini* is preserved in Agia Triada in the Mani and belongs to the so-called “Marbled Ware” (**Fig. 7**, VI) (Kontogiannis 2015: 173-183 [with previous bibliography]). The shallow dish forms part of the bichrome slipware (Jarrett, Blackmoore 2015: 98) and its hard and fine, red fabric points to an Italian origin, possibly of the lower Arno valley. Although most of the respective examples date from the 17th c. (Abel 1993: 76-77; Kontogiannis 2015: 195, fig. 1, c; Jarrett, Blackmoore 2015: 98, 99, fig. 4, 8-9) a date around the beginning of the 18th c., ascribed to the church of Agia Triada, can be suggested, given the continuation of the diffusion of this pottery as implied by evidence from other areas, such as London, Plymouth and Exeter (Allan 2015: 126; Jarrett, Blackmoore 2015: 98).

Regarding monochrome ceramics, as noted by researchers (Blake, Aguzzi 1990: 108; Gelichi, Nepoti 1999: 214), green glaze was widely used during the medieval period. Thus, it is not an easy task to link several plain glazed vessels (**Fig. 7**, VII.a-b) with specific production centres. Nevertheless, two vessels from Agios Georgios at Episkopi and Asomatos at Kouloumi (**Fig. 4**, IV.a-b) strongly resemble monochrome glazed *bacini* from Pisa attributed to the Islamic productions of the Iberian peninsula of the 12th c. (Berti, Giorgio 2011: 44, no. 172, no. 248).

Conclusion

Although Islamic pottery of varied provenances circulated in Byzantine areas during the 11th c. (indicatively: Hayes 1992: 43, 138-139; Vassi 1993: 292 no. 16; Georgiou 2011: 152, no. 75; Ballian 2013: 294-296), examples of the polychrome Islamic productions of Egypt and of Ifrīqiya or Sicily had not yet been noticed. However, that the evidence from Mesa Mani should not constitute an isolated case is implied by two *bacini* of the latter group, still preserved in the church of Agios Andreas at Logga (Messinia)⁴.

While some Middle-Byzantine churches of the Mesa Mani dating from within the 11th c. are decorated exclusively with Islamic pottery, others dating from the middle of the 12th until around 1500 are decorated exclusively with Byzantine wares (**Tab. 1**). Only in few of monuments dating from the second half or the third quarter of the 12th c. (**Tab. 1**) are Byzantine and Islamic productions combined.

Venetian merchants, participating in the region's trade from at least the end of the 11th c. and also encountered in Sparta (Lilie 1984: 55-57; Gerolymatou 2008: 168, 253; Armstrong 2009: 313-320; Stavrakos 2010: 129-144) could, among others, have played a decisive role for the arrival of the various Islamic wares in Mesa Mani, as has also been suggested in the case of similar evidence in Italy (Blake, Aguzzi 1990: 114-116). The castle sited on the Tigani cape, located not far away from several of the above mentioned churches (**Fig. 1**), could constitute a stepping stone for the diffusion of various wares within Mesa Mani's hinterland. Tombs and a multi-phase church have to date been excavated there (Drandakis 1977: 204-205; Avraméa 1998: 52, 55-60; Gkioles 2008-2009: 61-77; Mexia 2011: I, 45, 47-49, 275-278, 349-350, II, 186-187; 2015: 61-62; Mentzos 2017: 84), and it is there that the Middle-Byzantine castle of the Mani (κάστρο της Μαΐνης), the military and administrative centre of the Mani peninsula, should be located (Avraméa 1998: 52; Mexia 2011: 54, 351-352; Gkioles, Damoulios 2012: 187-193; Mexia 2015: 61).

Not all the issues relating to the *bacini* in churches of the Mesa Mani could be presented in this short paper. However, the previous analysis has made clear their importance in terms of the various glazed wares found in this area.

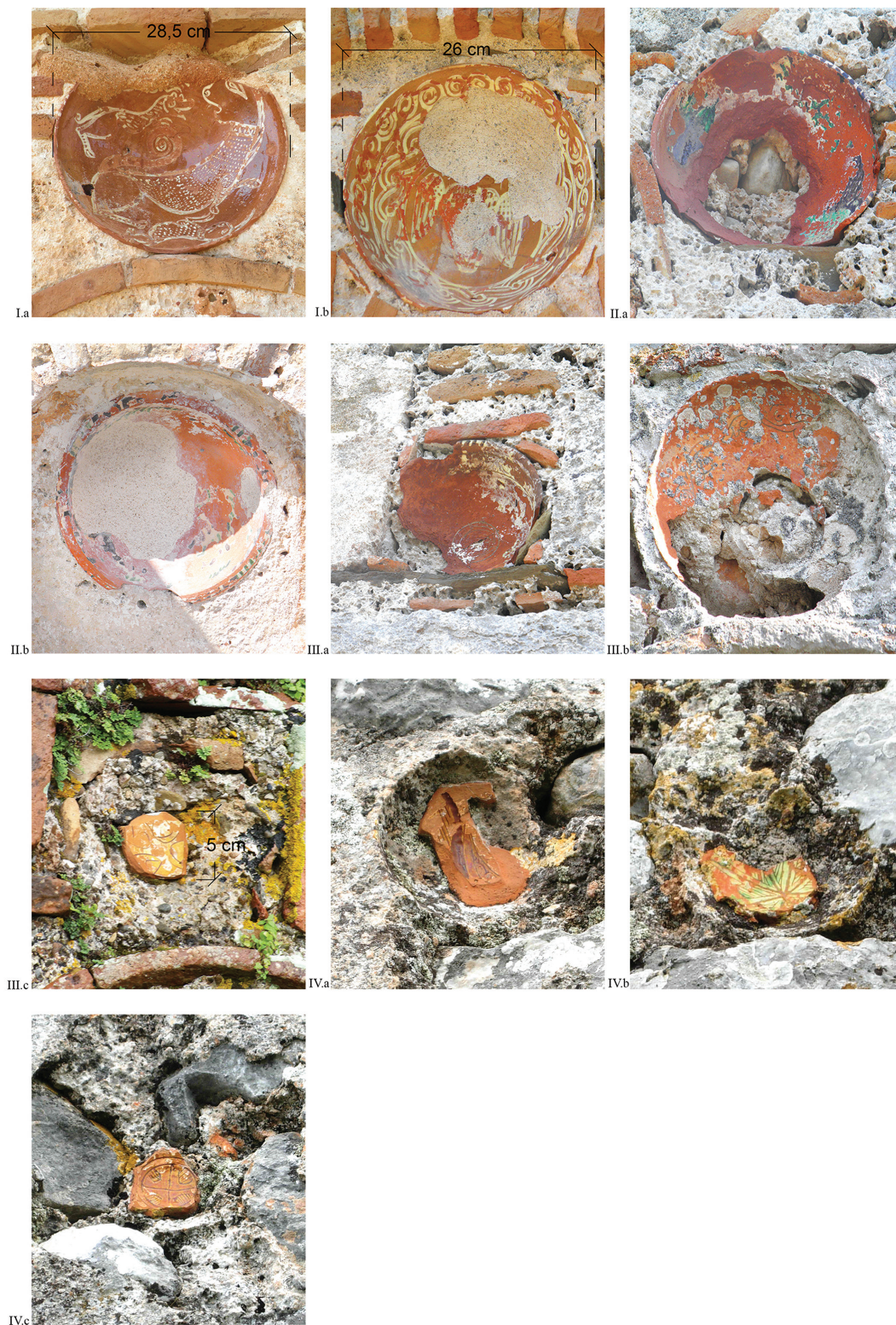


Fig. 6 Byzantine Pottery: I.a.-b.: Slip-Painted Ware, Agia Varvara, Erimos, II.a.-b.: Green and Brown Painted Ware: a. Agios Georgios, Episkopi, b. Agios Nikolaos, Ochia, III.a.: Painted-Sgraffito Ware, Agios Georgios, Episkopi, III.b.: Incised-Sgraffito Ware, Agios Theodoros at "Kalou", III.c.: Fine-Sgraffito Ware, Agios Ioannis, Keria, IV.a.-c.: Thessaloniki Ware, Panagia, Mandoforos (photos: A.G. Yangaki).



Fig. 7 V.a.-c.: Sgraffito with Concentric Circles, Agios Ioannis, Keria, VI.: Marbled Ware, Agia Triada, Briki, VIIa.-b.: Monochrome glazed pottery: a. Agios Ioannis, Keria, b.: Agios Georgios, Episkopi (photos: A.G. Yangaki).

Aknowledgments

I would like to thank the former and current directors of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Lakonia, Dr K. Diamanti and E. Pantou, for permission to study the material. I would also like to thank several colleagues for their varied help: Dr A. Mexia, V. Konti, Professors H. Blake and S. Gelichi, Drs D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi, F. Agrò, R.-P. Gayraud, S. Gragueb Chatti, M. Moraitou and V. Sacco.

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- 1 For example, on the occurrence of a polychrome ware once immured in Agia Varvara at Glezou, see the comment by G. Sanders (Sanders 2015, 610 note 70).
- 2 A vessel in the south gable, considered possibly, by A.H.S. Megaw (Megaw 1932-1933, 148), as an additional example of slip-painted ware, should probably be identified as the now not preserved example of lustreware mentioned above.
- 3 For the whole problem on the attribution of vessels with similar characteristics to the products of the workshops of Thessaloniki or of Constantinople, see: Yangaki 2012: 62-65; Papanikola-Bakirtzi, Waksman 2015: 227-235.
- 4 The vessels have been located in the course of the respective research programme. I would like to thank Dr Michalis Kappas (Ephorate of Antiquities of Messinia), for the possibility to mention this information. For this monument, see Kappas 2010: 149-150; for the church and these *bacini*: <https://www.immuredvessels.gr> (last accessed, April 5, 2019).

