

A GROUP OF SPANISH POTTERY ON THE ISLAND OF CHIOS IN THE 15TH CENTURY

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Abstract

In the middle of the 11th century, the renowned monastery of Nea Moni was founded by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos in the central part of the island of Chios in the Aegean Sea. During the same period (between 1043 and 1049), a large cistern was built to serve the needs of the monastic community in water. In the 15th century, when the island was ruled by the Genoese *maona*, imported Spanish vases were used to an extensive repair of the roof of the building. The majority of the vases belong to a type of large amphora and secondly, to a type of pithoi. The vessels originate from the region of Valencia and witness the flourishing trade between Chios and Spain.

Keywords: Spanish pottery, lusterware, Chios, Nea Moni, monastery, cistern, amphora, pithos, Spain, Valencia, vault, Manises, Aegean Sea, Greece, 11th century, trade, 15th century

Resumen

A mediados del siglo XI, el emperador bizantino Constantino IX Monomachos fundó el célebre monasterio de Nea Moni en la zona central de la isla de Quíos, en el Egeo. Durante este mismo período (entre 1043 y 1049) se construyó una gran cisterna para abastecer de agua a la comunidad monástica. En el siglo XV, cuando la isla se encontraba bajo el gobierno de una *maona* genovesa, cerámica española de importación fue utilizada en una reparación a gran escala del techo del edificio. La mayoría de las piezas utilizadas corresponde a una tipología de ánfora de gran capacidad y la segunda en importancia, a un tipo de *pithos*. Estas vasijas proceden de la zona de Valencia y dan prueba del floreciente comercio entre Chios y España.

Metadatos: Cerámica española, cerámica de reflejo metálico, Chíos, Nea Moni, monasterio, cisterna, ánfora, pithos, España, Valencia, bóveda, Manises, Egeo, Grecia, siglo XI, comercio, siglo XV

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The history of Nea Moni in Chios is well known. Its *katholikon*, a building of the mid-11th century, was commissioned and funded by the Emperor of Constantinople Constantine IX Monomachos, and holds a prominent position in the history of Byzantine architecture.¹ The same is true of its famous mosaic decoration that reflects the high quality of the art of the Capital in the heyday of the Macedonian dynasty.²

The monastery complex encloses an area of 1,35 acres within its walled perimeter, and is isolated in a mountainous area not far from the medieval town of Chios and its harbor (**Fig. 1**). It contained all the typical buildings a Byzantine monastery ought to have³: on the south side of the *katholikon* extends the long coenobium refectory (*trapeza*), in the corner of the enclosure the stronghold tower rises, and to the west of the church the half-subterranean cistern was constructed to serve the needs of the monastic community in water. All the aforementioned buildings are dated to the same period as the *katholikon*, namely the mid-11th century, and still stand to this day, preserving their original form to a great extent.⁴

1. The cistern

The cistern of the complex of Nea Moni has the typical rectangular floor plan of buildings of its kind. Its external dimensions are 19,46 x 12,52 m., covering a total surface area

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¹ Nea Moni of Chios has been inscribed in the UNESCO List of World Heritage since 1990 as a Monument of Outstanding Universal Value.

² D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics of Nea Moni on Chios*, Athens 1985.

³ A. Orlandos, *Μοναστηριακή Αρχιτεκτονική*, 2nd edition, Athens 1958.

⁴ Ch. Bouras, *Nea Moni on Chios, History and Architecture*, Athens 1984.

of 223 m², and its capacity is calculated to approximately 600 m³ of water. It is essentially a large hall supported, and internally divided, by two rows of four columns, which form fifteen square bays on the interior, all covered by blind hemispherical domes (**Fig. 2**). The entire structure is covered with a flat terrace roof (**Fig. 3**). Relevant research has shown that it was a utility building which closely followed the prototypes of the Capital, Constantinople, and can be dated accurately between 1043 and 1049.⁵

2. The excavation

In the late 1990's, an extensive restoration project of the cistern was carried out by the State Archaeological Service, the Ephorate of Antiquities.⁶ The first stage included the removal of the stone slabs that paved the flat roof of the building, in order to reveal and consolidate the extrados of the domes. First, a protective shelter was constructed over the whole structure, and subsequently, the domes were exposed by a methodical archaeological excavation. The entire surface of the roof was investigated, and revealed the extrados of the 15 hemispheric blind domes that covered the reservoir, as well as the interconnected narrow stone-built walls (with a height of 1.07 m.) between them. A dense and solid grid was thus formed on the roof of the building. The circumference of the domes, along with the straight walls that intersect them, formed eight curved, cruciform voids, conventionally named Sections/Voids A - H (**Fig. 4**). As the excavation progressed, there began to come to light the bases of vessels; it was thus made clear that the voids of the curved, deep spaces were in-filled with small and medium capacity vessels, under a hard layer of plaster (**Fig. 5**). In the eastern half of the roof the infill consisted largely of this type of pottery, while in the western half, earth was used as filling material. The voids between domes 1-9 (Voids A-D), in particular, were filled with pottery vessels, while in the western half between domes 7-15 (Voids E-H) infill consisted only of debris, with the inclusion of potsherds and small stones (**Fig. 4**).

The pottery vessels were placed facing downwards, and filled the voids between the vaulting, following a practice known for centuries, in which masonry walls were relieved of unnecessary loads. This practice also achieved a certain economy of material,

⁵ O. Vassi – St. Faitaki, “Η κινστέρνα της Νέας Μονής στη Χίο”, *Deltion Christianikis Archaïologikis Etaireias* 36 (2015), 1-20.

⁶ K. Scampavias, “3η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων, Αναστηλωτικές εργασίες, Νέα Μονή, Κινστέρνα”, *AD* 54 (1999), Χρονικά, 826; Id., “3η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων, Αναστηλωτικές εργασίες, Νέα Μονή, Κινστέρνα”, *AD* 55 (2000), Χρονικά, 997, fig.1; O. Vassi, “3η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων, Αναστηλωτικές εργασίες, Νέα Μονή, Κινστέρνα”, *AD* 56-59 (2001-2004), Χρονικά, Β6, 62.

expenses and time during construction, not to mention the fact that it also functioned as a measure for the prevention of moisture as well.⁷

3. The vases

A total of 93 vessels were collected from the roof of the cistern⁸. Eighty four of them came from the first four eastern voids, between domes 1-9 and form a closed pottery assembly (**Fig. 4**). The other nine vessels – mostly tableware - came from the banked up western half, between domes 7 – 15 and their parts were found scattered in the other four cruciform voids (E-H). Since they do not appear to belong to a coherent group, and thus constitute an evidently different case, they will not be presented here with the above closed group. From the first Void A (in the northeastern corner of the roof) 17 vessels are collected, from Void B (in the southeastern corner) 37 vessels were collected, along with another 15 vessels from Void C, and 15 from Void D (approximately in the middle of the roof) (**Fig. 6**).

The 84 vases of the group that were retrieved from the closed eastern section can be classified into five types: I: amphorae without handles with a round base, II: pithoi with a flat base, III: small vessels of daily use for the transport of liquids (water or wine), IV: luxury tableware and dining utensils, and V: cooking pots. Among the 84 vases, 47 belong to Type I (amphorae) (55,95%), 12 to Type II (pithoi) (14,29%), 17 to Type III (daily use) (20,23%), 5 to Type IV (luxury tableware) (5,95%), and 3 to Type V (cooking pots) (3,58%) (**Fig. 7**).

A substantial number of pots have traces of previous use, indicating that the vases were not new, but rather used, and were purchased to be incorporated into the repair of the cistern, thus being put to use - at least - a third time⁹. The bodies of some vessels

⁷ Ch. Bouras, *Ιστορία της Αρχιτεκτονικής*, Β', 2nd edition, Athens 1993, 220; R. Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, 2nd edition, Philadelphia 2008, 330; Vassi – Faitaki, “Η Κινστέρνα” (cit. n. 5), 12-13; H. Blake, “Le ceramiche delle volte del Palazzo Comunale a Montalcino (Si): le circostanze della scoperta e ritrovamenti analoghi in Italia e Spagna”, in *Atti del XLVI Convegno Internazionale della Ceramica, Ceramica e Architettura, Savona, 24-25 Maggio 2013*, Albenga 2014, 85-100, here 93-96.

⁸ The vessels were conserved during the period 1999-2002 in the Laboratories of the Ephorate. See V. Ayannidis, “Η συντήρηση των αγγείων της Νέας Μονής Χίου”, *Poster Communication in the Annual Meeting of the Conservators of Antiquities and Works of Art*, Panhellenic Union of Conservators of Antiquities, Auditorium of the Acropolis Museum 7.12.2013.

⁹ Their first use coincides with the original manufacture of the vessels for transport and storage of agricultural products, the second use with the cut off of the narrow necks for a new use that required a wide mouth, and the last use with their incorporation into the vaulting system of the cistern.

had been punctured, while in others it is clear that the narrow neck had been severed on purpose, probably because their new use required a wide opening.

3.a. Types of the vases

Type I: Amphorae without handles

We call the vessels of this type “amphorae” following the terminology of the Spanish literature, in which vessels of this type are called “ánforas”.¹⁰ In the Greek language, from which the word originates, an “amphora” is an object that can be held from two points, and consequently, in our case, a vase with two handles is implied. The vases that concern us here are without handles, so the Greek term is used rather loosely.

Forty-seven pots belong to this type (**Fig. 8-9**): they are amphorae with a rounded base, ovoid body, distinct shoulder, a short and very narrow cylindrical neck, a double ridge that reinforces the neck, and no handles.¹¹ Their height varies from 65 to 77 cm, the diameter of mouth from 7,5 to 13,5 cm, and the maximum diameter of the body from 44 to 49 cm. Their short neck has a height of just 4,5 to 10 cm. The clay is rough with frequent rounded inclusions, has a light reddish color (Munsell 5YR 7/6 or 6/6 reddish yellow or 2,5 YR 6/4 light reddish brown) and bears a slip of the same texture. Their capacity is approximately 50 liters.

All 47 vessels can be further subdivided into two subcategories in terms of shape, though the differences are small and rather inconsequential; they appear to be attributable to their production in different, but nearby, pottery workshops that operated simultaneously to produce the same type of vessel. The differences lie in the curves of the body of the vessel, which in one case are very intense, while the other softer: in one or two of these¹² the convex body narrows substantially along its body, and its diameter decreases noticeably, while further on it widens again forming a convex curve, resulting in a body with highly accentuated overall curves. In the rest, the transition is smoother and the ovoid shape more regular.

The particular features of these vessels indicate that they were intended for the storage and transport of liquids; a very narrow mouth whose purpose was to reduce the

¹⁰ M. del C. Riu de Martin, “Análisis tipológico de las cerámicas halladas en las iglesias barcelonesas del siglo XIV: comentario del poster tipológico”, in R. El Hraiki and E. Erbatí (eds.), *Actes du 5^{ème} Colloque sur la céramique médiévale en Méditerranée occidentale, Rabat 11-17 Novembre 1991*, Rabat 1995, 427-434.

¹¹ For the description of the pots, the guidelines of *Corinth's Excavations Archaeological Manual* have been followed. See G. D. R. Sanders – S. A. James – A. Carter, *Corinth's Excavations Archaeological Manual*, Grand Forks 2017, 111-114.

¹² The vase inv. ANM 55 found in Void C and the vase inv. ANM 12 found in Void B.

possibility of spillage,¹³ a lip to which a stopper was adapted, a rounded base that allowed them to be stacked in the ships' cargo holds¹⁴ or to be wedged into wooden bench sockets in the hull.¹⁵ Apart from these characteristics, most of them retain the trace of a rope that was pressed onto the object, while the clay was still fresh, that is, as long as it was still in the workshop, at the stage of construction, at their maximum diameters.¹⁶ This rope mark has been interpreted as a unit of measurement and consequently as a method of standardizing the size of the vessel and its capacity, so that its liquid capacity, and thus its commercial value, would be readily legible.¹⁷ On the other hand, other researchers posit that this groove or indentation facilitated the hauling and transport of the vessels.¹⁸

Their production site was Paterna in the Valencia region of Southeast Spain and production run from the mid-14th up to the 17th century.¹⁹ For example, in the church of St. Felix of Sabadell in Barcelona, a vase of a similar type has been dated accurately between 1403 and 1420.²⁰ In the church of Santa Maria in Alicante, 8%, i.e. 19 specimens of the 450 vases that had been embedded in the groin vaults of various parts of the roof

¹³ F. Lister – R. Lister, “The Recycled Pots and Potsherds of Spain”, *Historical Archaeology* 15 (1981), 66-78, here 66.

¹⁴ In the way suggested by Ch. Bakirtzis, *Βυζαντινά Τσουκαλολάγηννα, Συμβολή στη μελέτη ονομασιών, σχημάτων και χρήσεων πυρίμαχων μαγειρικών σκευών, μεταφορικών και αποθηκευτικών δοχείων*, Athens 1989, 71-74.

¹⁵ In the way suggested by Spanish literature researchers. J. L. Menéndez Fueyo, *La cerámica medieval de la Basílica de Santa María de Alicante. Arqueología, arquitectura y cerámica de una excavación arqueológica insólita en España*, BAR Int. Ser. XXXX, Oxford 2012, 87.

¹⁶ The same as, for example, in amphoras found in Russian Bolgar. V. Koval, “Spanish ceramics in Medieval Bolgar”, in F. Yenişerhilioğlu (ed.), *XIth Congress AIECM2 on Medieval and Modern period Mediterranean Ceramics, Proceedings, 19-24 October 2015, Antalya 2017*, 193 and 195.

¹⁷ Koval, “Spanish ceramics” (cit. n. 16), 95. Other researchers have interpreted it as fixing spot for pulleys that would facilitate the vessels' hoisting and transport. A. Vionis, “Τα ταπεινά αντικείμενα ως μέσο αναγνώρισης και αξιολόγησης της ανθρώπινης δραστηριότητας στο βυζαντινό χωριό (8^{ος}-15^{ος} αι.): δεδομένα από συστηματικές έρευνες επιφανείας”, in A. Yangaki - A. Panopoulou (eds.), *Το Βυζάντιο χωρίς λάμψη, Τα ταπεινά αντικείμενα και η χρήση τους στον καθημερινό βίο των Βυζαντινών*, Athens 2018, 45-78, 66.

¹⁸ Menéndez Fueyo, *La cerámica medieval* (cit. n. 15), 99.

¹⁹ Koval, “Spanish ceramics”, 195; P. Lopez Elum, “Origen y evolución de dos grandes centros cerámicos: Manises y Paterna”, in *La cerámica medieval nel Mediterraneo occidentale. Siena-Faenza, 8-12 ottobre 1984*, Florence 1986, 163-181.

²⁰ A. Roig i Deulofeu – J. Roig i Buxó, “Les peces de descàrrega de volta de l'església de St. Fèlix (Sabadell, Vallès Occ., Barcelona): Anys 1403-1420”, in G. D. d' Archimbaud (ed.), in *La céramique médiévale en Méditerranée. Actes du VIe Congrès de l'AIECM2, Aix-en-Provence (13-18 Nov. 1995)*, Aix-en-Provence 1997, 549-553, 549 and 552, type II.

were of this type and date back to the last quarter of the 15th century.²¹ They all showed traces of previous use that testify that they were objects purchased at the harbor of the Crown of Aragon for the construction of the church between the years 1480-1530,²² while before that most of them contained wine. Later, it is known that this particular vase type had been extensively used commercially across the Atlantic, and it is the most popular type of commercial amphora in the colonies of the new continent, America.²³ Similar amphorae have been found in Bolgar, Russian Tatarstan, on the Volga River, and recently in the port of Feodosia, the medieval Genoese Kafa on the Crimean Peninsula, in the Black Sea, where they were transported and imported by Italian traders.²⁴ Later, in the 16th century, they are found in Tuscany, Italy, at Serravezza near Lucca, in the palace of the Medici erected by Cosimo in the middle of the 16th century, while types 3 and 4 of the vessels that had been incorporated in its vaulting, are similar to the amphorae in the cistern of Nea Moni on Chios, in the Aegean Sea.²⁵

Type II: Pithoi

The second vase type, found in much smaller quantities in the cistern of Nea Moni are pithoi without handles with a flat base, ovoid body, a very low –almost non-existent– neck, and a very wide and flattened lip that protrudes substantially from the neck (**Fig. 10-11**). Their height varies between 87 and 88 cm, the diameter of the base between 16,4 and 22,0 cm, the diameter of the mouth between 7,5 and 11,0 cm and the maximum body diameter between 41 and 49 cm. The clay is fine, with few rounded inclusions, with a light-yellow color (Munsell 10 YR 7/4, very pale brown) and bears a slip of the same color. Their capacity is about 75 liters. In Spanish literature the vases of this type are called “tinaja”.

This type has all the characteristics of storage containers: a flat base to firmly stand in the tall and narrow storage spaces in which they were placed, a flattened lip to accommodate a stone, clay, wooden or plaster²⁶ lid and a very thick, wide and protruding rim that would be resistant to cracking during use, as when various other container vessels or utensils would accidentally hit it.²⁷

²¹ Menéndez Fueyo, *La cerámica medieval*, type VII, 86-87, fig. 6.3.

²² Blake, “Le ceramiche” (cit. n. 7), 92; Menéndez Fueyo, *La cerámica medieval*, 22 and 75.

²³ Lister – Lister, “The Recycled Pots” (cit. n. 13), 71; Menéndez Fueyo, *La cerámica medieval*, 87; Id., “Cerámicas de transporte y comercio en la Basílica de Santa María de Alicante. Producción y distribución”, *Arqueología Medieval* 11 (2011), 225-252, 231-233, type VII.

²⁴ Found in a Russian-Ukrainian expedition in 2014: Koval, “Spanish ceramics”, 195, n. 4.

²⁵ Blake, “Le ceramiche”, 87.

²⁶ Menéndez Fueyo, *La cerámica medieval*, 99.

²⁷ Bakirtzis, *Βυζαντινά Τσουκαλολάγηνα* (cit. n. 14), 111.

In some of these (4 out of 12) there is painted decoration on the shoulder with a red ochre pigment (the *almazarrón* mentioned by sources).²⁸ The motifs of the painted decoration on the surface of the vessels after their firing are simple crosses,²⁹ double crosses,³⁰ a cross with anchor-like ends,³¹ a coat-of-arms shield,³² an undefined linear theme,³³ the figure of a saint on horseback bearing a shield, and an animal in front of a tree (**Fig. 12**). The motifs belong to the category of religious symbols that are catalogued on Spanish vases and are considered to be drawn there for the declaration of faith and for the protection of the vessels from breakage and other damage, either to the vessel itself or its contents.³⁴ Alternatively, other researchers have interpreted them as evidence of mutual interchange between pottery workshops, their market traders, or contemporary marketing policies of commercial business.³⁵ Painted symbols have been considered as “trademarks” of the merchants who traded them to identify and/or certify their products.³⁶

In only one case, apart from the painted symbols, there is also a circular seal stamped on the shoulder of a pithos (**Fig. 13**).³⁷ The seals stamped on the pots before firing in the

²⁸ F. Amigues – E. Cruselles – R. González Villaescusa – V. Lerma, “Les « emballages céramiques » de Paterna / Manises dans le commerce du bas Moyen Age”, *Bibliothèque de la Commission archéologique et littéraire de Narbonne* 46 (1995), 135-151, 143 ; J. L. Menéndez Fueyo, “Firmar la tinaja, marcar la historia. Marcas y grafitis en las cerámicas de Santa María de Alicante”, *Marq. Arqueología y Museos* 2 (2007), 107-130, 115-116.

²⁹ On vase inv. ANM 70, found in Void D, max. h. 84 cm (without neck or rim). On display in the Byzantine Museum of Chios.

³⁰ On vase inv. ANM 67, found in Void D, max. h. 76,8 cm. (without neck or rim), diam. of base 17,8 cm.

³¹ On vase inv. ANM 66, found in Void D, max. h. 61 cm. (without neck or rim). The same vase bears the next painted motif, a coat-of-arms.

³² On vase inv. ANM 66, found in Void D, max. h. 61 cm. (without neck or rim). The same vase bears the previous painted symbol, the cross with anchor-like ends.

³³ On the vase inv. ANM 35, found in Void B, max. h. 83 cm. (without neck or rim).

³⁴ E. González Gozalo, “La cerámica bajomedieval de la Catedral de Mallorca”, in *II Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, III, Madrid 1987, 469-482, 479.

³⁵ F. Amigues – E. Cruselles – R. González – Villaescusa – J. V. Lerna, “Los envases cerámicos de Paterna/Manises y el comercio bajo medieval, in *Actes du 5^{ème} Colloque* (cit. n. 10), 346-361, 349.

³⁶ Amigues *et al.*, “Les « emballages céramiques »” (cit. n. 28), 138-139. For earlier specimens from Late Roman period, where it is also considered that the dipinti have to do only with the trade and not with the manufacture of transport amphoras see Ch. Diamanti, *Εντόπια παραγωγή και εισαγωγή αμφορέων στην Αλάσαρνα της Κω (5^{ος}-7^{ος} αι.)*, Athens 2010, 61-64.

³⁷ It is the vase inv. ANM 35, found in Void B, max. h. 83 cm (without neck or rim). On display in the Museum of the Refectory of Nea Moni.

kiln have been interpreted by research as potter's marks.³⁸ The tower featured –elsewhere also found along with stars– is the Mauritanian tower of the Paterna settlement, which is often found in pottery marks, not least because specific instructions were given in the late 15th century for the tower to be depicted on the seals of all workshops.³⁹ It is the same seal found on many vessels used in the vaulting of Andalusian monuments, such as in the Barcelona Cathedral or in the monastery of Sant Pere de les Puelles.⁴⁰

Pottery of this type was manufactured in Paterna from the end of the 14th and throughout the 15th century.⁴¹ They are a very common find in the roofs of the monuments of Catalonia and Aragon. Specimens of the kind have been unearthed in the Balearics and in Italy, in the Medici palace at Serravezza or in the Romanesque church of Sant'Agostino in Pietrasanta of Tuscany,⁴² in the Black Sea, in Russian Bolgar on the Volga river.⁴³ According to the sources, Valencian pottery was also traded in France. It is notable that Spanish pithoi of the type described, which came to light in the monastery of Nea Moni in Chios, have also been found on the island of Rhodes, another island in the Aegean Sea, to the south of Chios. In buildings of various uses, such as in secular buildings⁴⁴ or in the Gothic church of Virgin Mary of Burgos,⁴⁵ empty vases, including Spanish pithoi, were discovered on the roof, in reuse, in the second half of the 15th century. Spanish pithoi of the same type were also retrieved during recent underwater investigations in the port of the same city.⁴⁶ Rhodes from 1306/1309 to

³⁸ Bakirtzis, *Βυζαντινά Τσουκαλολάγνηνα*, 82; F. Amigues – M. Mesquida García, *Un horno medieval de cerámica: "El Testar del Molí", Paterna (Valencia)*, Madrid 1987, 62 and 64; Menéndez Fueyo, "Firmar la tinaja" (cit. n. 28), 108; Vassi – Faitaki, "Η κινστέρνα", 16, fig. 18.

³⁹ R. A. Barberá, *La cerámica medieval de Paterna, Estudio de marcas alfareras*, Paterna 1978, 51, 91, 93, fig. 114, 119, 120.

⁴⁰ Menéndez Fueyo, "Firmar la tinaja", 109.

⁴¹ Amigues *et al.*, "Les « emballages céramiques »", 143, type III, IIIa; Roig i Deulofeu – Roig i Buxó, "Les peces de descàrrega" (cit. n. 20), 550, type III.

⁴² Menéndez Fueyo, *La cerámica medieval*, type II, fig. 6.1, 78-80, 96, 101, 104; Id., "Cerámicas de transporte" (cit. n. 23) 228-230, fig. 71.1, fig.8.

⁴³ Koval, "Spanish ceramics", 193, Group IB, Type II, fig. 9.2.

⁴⁴ M. Michailidou, "4η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων, Καταγραφές", *AD 47* (1992), B2, Χρονικά, 668, fig. 188e; Y. Toumazis – A. Pace – M.-R. Belgiorno – S. Antoniadou (eds.), *Crusades, Myths and Realities*, Nicosia 2006, 210, n. 104. Provenance: Catalan House in the old town of Rhodes. To the Collections of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Rhodes belong a total of 27 Spanish pithoi which came from roofs of buildings.

⁴⁵ G. Katsou, "4η Εφορεία Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων, Παναγία του Μπούργκου", *AD 56-59* (2001-2004), B6, Χρονικά, 383, fig. 123c.

⁴⁶ K. A. Tsompanidis – X. Argyri, "Iberian Ware from the Commercial Port of Rhodes Island", Poster in the *12th Congress AIECM3 on Medieval and Modern Period Mediterranean Ceramics*, Athens, October 21-27, 2018, Program, 53.

1522, namely throughout the 15th century, was in the hands of the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and during that period the island enjoyed great prosperity and wealth. In the 213 years of the administration by the Knights, Rhodes was an advanced outpost of Western politics and art, as well as of western cultural environment. Besides, one of the seven ethnic groups (“lingue”) that constituted the Order until 1461 was Aragon, which included all the knights from the Iberian Peninsula, and, later on, those of Castilla as well.⁴⁷

Type III: Luxury tableware

The third type includes five luxury tableware which came from Void B on the roof of the cistern (**Fig. 4**), three of which are representative examples of Late Byzantine / early post-Byzantine ceramics. They are two shallow plates and a bowl. The plates are green glazed and bear a distinctive combined sgraffito⁴⁸ and painted⁴⁹ decoration, typical of the first centuries of post-Byzantine production. The bowl is small and has a monochrome pale green glaze.⁵⁰

Of particular interest is the fourth bowl that was found⁵¹ and is a typical product of Spanish workshops of the 15th century with a metallic luster (“loza dorada”). It is a small but deep bowl (“escudilla”) (h. 5,5 cm., base diam. 5,7 cm., rim diam. 14 cm), with a low ring foot and a body hemispherical internally and carinated externally.⁵² It is covered with tin glaze and bears the well-known decorative motif of palmettes (**Fig. 14**): the center is rendered with golden-brown color and depicts a complete multi-leaved palmette from which four half-palmettes grow. Dots of blue cobalt form a cross on the surface, applied above the plant decoration. The bowl can be dated to the first half of the 15th

⁴⁷ E. Kollias, *Η μεσαιωνική πόλη της Ρόδου και το Παλάτι του Μεγάλου Μαγίστρου*, Athens 1994, 16 and 36.

⁴⁸ Part of the rim of a plate with yellow-green glaze and fine sgraffito inscribed with a thin pointed spike. The plate cannot be restored.

⁴⁹ Plate with a low ring foot, h. 5 cm., diam. of rim 22,5 cm., diam. of base 7,5 cm. (inv. ANM 77). In the interior, sgraffito spirals and above them, dense vertical green brushstrokes. No glaze on the exterior.

⁵⁰ Shallow bowl with a high ring foot (inv. ANM 78). It bears a band of dark green glaze under the curved lip and a very pale green glaze on the body. H. 5 cm., diam. of rim 11,8 cm. Diam. of base 5 cm.

⁵¹ It has been inventoried in the Collections of the Byzantine Museum of Chios with inv. no. BMX 4501/A 540.

⁵² J. V. Lerma – J. Martí – J. Pascual – M. Paz Soler – F. Escribà – M. Mesquida, “Sistematización de la loza gótico-mudéjar de Paterna/Manises”, in *La ceramica medievale nel Mediterraneo occidentale*. Siena (cit. n. 19), 183-203, 187, Tipología loza dorada, fig. 4.1.

century,⁵³ since from 1475 onwards, production and quality began to decline, due to the increasing dominance of Italian Renaissance ceramics in the markets.⁵⁴

The center of manufacture for vessels of “loza dorada” at its best phase (“clásica”) in the 15th century was Paterna and Manises, on the outskirts of Valencia.⁵⁵ Numerous vases of this type have been found in Spain and in other countries with which Spain maintained commercial contacts. Examples have been found in mainland Greece,⁵⁶ in Salonica,⁵⁷ in Isthmia and in Nauplion,⁵⁸ while in all the other cases they are found on islands located in the Aegean Sea, such as Chios, Crete, Rhodes,⁵⁹ Andros,⁶⁰ Thasos;⁶¹ lastly, a sherd with Spanish “loza dorada” has even been found in the Cyclades –though its identification is made with some reservations.⁶²

Type IV: Pots for everyday use

The fourth type includes pots of medium and small size for everyday use that served the needs of the domestic economy and everyday life. They were intended for the

⁵³ E. C. Platamone – S. Fiorilla, “Ceramiche a lustro del Museo Regionale della Ceramica di Caltagirone”, in *La céramique médiévale en Méditerranée* (cit. n. 20) 478; M. Mesquida García, “Paterna: Cuatro siglos de cerámica azul y dorada”, in *Actes du 5^{ème} Colloque* (cit. n. 10), 439-440.

⁵⁴ Lerma *et al.*, “Sistematización” (cit. n. 52), 201; A. Gutiérrez, “A Guide to the Identification of Spanish Medieval Ceramics: Valencia, Classic Lusterware”, [http://community.dur.ac.uk/Spanish pottery](http://community.dur.ac.uk/Spanish%20pottery).

⁵⁵ B. Martínez Caviro, *La loza dorada*, Madrid 1982, 131 and 135; M. P. Soler Ferrer, *Historia de la cerámica valenciana*, II, Barcelona 1987, 156, 159-160.

⁵⁶ T. Gregory, “Local and imported medieval pottery from Isthmia”, in S. Gelichi (ed.), *La ceramica nel mondo bizantino tra XI e XV secolo e i suoi rapporti con l'Italia. Atti del seminario Certosa di Pontignano (Siena)*, Florence 1993, 283-306, 302-304, fig.1, 24, 26.

⁵⁷ D. Makropoulou, “Από το υστεροβυζαντινό νεκροταφείο της Μονής Βλαττάδων”, *Η Θεσσαλονίκη* 1 (1985), 255-309, 270, no.1, fig. 4d-3.

⁵⁸ A. Yangaki, *Εφραλωμένη κεραμική από τη θέση «Άγιοι Θεόδωροι» στην Ακροναυπλία (11^{ος} – 17^{ος} αι.)*, Athens 2012, 143-146, 167, fig.115.

⁵⁹ M. Michailidou, “Εισηγμένη κεραμική στη Ρόδο στα χρόνια της Ιπποτοκρατίας (1309-1522)”, *Ρόδος 2.400 χρόνια, Η πόλη της Ρόδου από την ίδρυσή της μέχρι την κατάληψη από τους Τούρκους (1523), Διεθνές επιστημονικό συνέδριο, Ρόδος 24-29 Οκτωβρίου 1993*, Πρακτικά, Β', Athens 2000, 417-428, 421-422, 427, πιν.166^α.

⁶⁰ E. Dori – P. Velissariou – M. Michailidis, *Κάτω Κάστρο, Η πρώτη φάση των ανασκαφών στο βενετικό Φρούριο της Χώρας Άνδρου*, Andros 2003, 161-164.

⁶¹ V. François, *La céramique byzantine à Thasos*, *Études thasiennes* 16, Athens 1995, 113-115, 239, fig. 76-77, tab.19, 20.

⁶² A. K. Vionis, *A Crusader, Ottoman, Early Modern Aegean Archaeology, Built Environment and Domestic Material Culture in the Mediterranean and post-Medieval Cyclades, Greece (13th-20th Century AD)*, Leiden 2013, 243.

transportation of liquids over short distances e.g., water from a well or from a spring to the house, or wine from the cellar to the table. They are divided into two subcategories with small differences, mainly in body shape.

a. Stamnia⁶³: they correspond to the “botijo” type of Spanish literature. These are medium-sized, plain vases, with a height of 33-37 cm, and base diameter of 10,2-10,8 cm. They have a flat base, a globular body, a low cylindrical neck with horizontal grooves, a narrow mouth and a simple, vertical rim. They have two handles with ellipsoid cross-sections. Eleven vases of this type were used in the vault of the Nea Moni cistern.⁶⁴

Their size and shape made them suitable for vault filling material and it has been observed that their use is quite frequent in the 15th century, also in the roofs of the Gothic churches of Barcelona.⁶⁵

b. Stamnia that correspond to the “barrilete” type of Spanish literature. They are 29 cm high and 7,5 cm wide. The base is flat, with a diameter of 10 cm, the body is spindle-like with the largest diameter formed in its lower part, a cylindrical neck and two handles with ellipsoid cross-section. Three vases of this type were found in the cistern.⁶⁶

c. A kouroupi,⁶⁷ a small storage vessel with a variety of uses (“jarro” in the Spanish literature) has a flat base, a spherical body, a very broad mouth and one handle. It is covered in an olive-greenish lead glaze on both its interior and exterior.

Containers of this type were intended for the temporary storage of liquid or solid products such as honey, cheese, salted food, butter, olives, and milled foods until their consumption. They are also glazed on the interior and were incorporated in the roofs of churches of 14th century Barcelona.⁶⁸

Type V: Cooking pots

In the fifth, and final, type we can classify three cookware which bear external traces of fire (“olla” in the Spanish literature). Parts of three of them were found in the roof of the cistern, but only one could be used to safely reconstruct its original shape. It has a height of 16 cm, and a rim diameter equal to 12 cm. It is an open vessel, with a rounded base,

⁶³ Bakirtzis, *Βυζαντινά Τσουκαλολάγηνα*, 95-99.

⁶⁴ They are the vases inv. ANM 50, 51, 52 (found in Void A); ANM 7, 8, 13 (found in Void B); and ANM 75, 76, 80 (found in Void D).

⁶⁵ Riu de Martin, “Análisis tipológico” (cit. n. 10), 427.

⁶⁶ These are the vases inv. ANM 16, 17, 34 found in Void B.

⁶⁷ Bakirtzis, *Βυζαντινά Τσουκαλολάγηνα*, 122-125, fig. 32.2, 33.3.

⁶⁸ Riu de Martin, “Análisis tipológico”, 427.

spherical body, very broad mouth with no neck, a curved lip intended to receive a lid, and two handles whose top attachment points are located much lower than the rim.

This sort of kitchenware between the filling material in the roofs of monuments, as in the case of Siena in Italy, has been interpreted as the utensils of the workers employed in the construction site,⁶⁹ while in other monuments they have been considered to be useless household utensils, purchased from the surrounding households, to be used as vaulting infill.⁷⁰

4. The practice of pottery infill over vaulting

The practice of using pottery as infill in the voids over masonry vaulting is encountered in the area of Greece throughout history; until today the practice has been confirmed in the middle Byzantine church of Aghia Sophia in Thessaloniki,⁷¹ the Paleologan period Odegetria church (Brontochion monastery) at Mystras,⁷² the late Byzantine church of Agios Stephanos in Laconia,⁷³ in Corinth (Peloponnese),⁷⁴ in Parigotissa of Arta⁷⁵ and the monastery of Kato Panaghia, also in Arta (Epirus)⁷⁶ and on the island of Rhodes under the rule of the Knights (14-15th cen.).⁷⁷ Pottery infill material is most often encountered in 14th century strata; this phenomenon has been associated with the gradual decline in the use of clay amphorae, which fell out of use as a storage and transport vessel for agricultural products, in favor of novel containers such as wooden barrels and casks. In monuments of Byzantine architecture outside of Greece,⁷⁸ *magarika* and *lagenia* pottery

⁶⁹ R. Frankovich – M. Valenti (eds.), *C'era una volta: la ceramica medievale nel Convento del Carmine*, Siena 2002.

⁷⁰ Blake, “Le ceramiche”, 96.

⁷¹ Bakirtzis, *Βυζαντινά Τσουκαλολάγηνα*, 88, n. 137; K. Theocharidou, *Η αρχιτεκτονική του ναού της Αγίας Σοφίας στη Θεσσαλονίκη*, Athens 1994, 204-210.

⁷² A. Orlandos, “Εργασίαι αναστυλώσεως βυζαντινών μνημείων”, *Αρχαίον Βυζαντινών Μνημείων Ελλάδος* 2 (1935), 107-206, fig. 6; G. D. R. Sanders, “Three Peloponnesian churches and their importance for the chronology of late 13th and early 14th century pottery in the eastern Mediterranean”, in V. Déroche – J. M. Spiesser (eds.), *Recherches sur la céramique byzantine*, BCH suppl. XVIII, Athens 1989, 189-199, 196-197.

⁷³ G. D. R. Sanders, “The Medieval Pottery”, in W. D. Taylour – R. Janko (eds.), *Ayios Stephanos, Excavations at a Bronze Age and Medieval Settlement in South Laconia*, Athens 2008, 394-402; V. Zmaić Kralj, “Byzantine maritime trade based on underwater archaeological finds of the eastern Adriatic”, *Skyllis* 1 (2017), 46-61, 58.

⁷⁴ Sanders, “Three Peloponnesian churches” (cit. n. 72), 196, n. 27.

⁷⁵ A. Orlandos, *Η Παρηγορίτισσα της Άρτης*, Athens 1963, 41-42, fig. 36.

⁷⁶ V. Papadopoulou (ed.), *Τα βυζαντινά μνημεία της Ηπείρου*, Ioannina 2008, 57.

⁷⁷ See n. 45 and 46.

⁷⁸ Bakirtzis, *Βυζαντινά Τσουκαλολάγηνα*, 99; Ousterhout, *Master Builders* (cit. n. 7), 229-230.

vessels have been found over the vaulting of buildings in Constantinople,⁷⁹ in the church of the Mother of God (Veljusa) in North Macedonia⁸⁰ and in St. Sophia of Ohrid.⁸¹

On the opposite side of the Mediterranean, where most of the pottery that was incorporated into the Nea Moni cistern was produced, the practice of using pottery as infill over vaulting was frequent in the part of the Iberian Peninsula closer to the Mediterranean,⁸² an area that corresponds to Roman and Byzantine Spain (Hispania), while it is not encountered in neither the central, north or west parts of the peninsula.⁸³ The practice was widely utilized as it greatly improved the structural integrity of buildings, by relieving them of unnecessary dead loads, successfully reutilized the vast quantities of useless pottery that accumulated in inhabited areas, and lastly, also protected them against moisture ingress.

The use of pottery as infill in voids over vaulting is first recorded –at least according to the data available today– in Pompey in the 2nd cen. B.C., and until the 2nd cen. A.D. had become an established practice, widely used throughout the eastern and western Roman world. This technique was positively adopted by the Byzantines, as is attested in the surviving specimens of Byzantine architecture in Italy, namely the monuments of Ravenna, and Albenga in Liguria, during the 5th and 6th century;⁸⁴ it is also to be found later in Arab-Norman Sicily.⁸⁵ The great theoretical writer of the Renaissance Leon Battista Alberti in 1452 refers to the practice in his third Book, in the chapter on vaulting,

⁷⁹ A. Choisy, *L'art de bâtir chez les Byzantins*, Paris 1883, 72; R. Demangel – E. Mamboury, *Le quartier de Manges et la première région de Constantinople*, Paris 1939, 45-46, fig. 49, 198.3; M. Ahunbay – Z. Ahunbay, “Restoration work at the Zeyrek Camii, 1997-1998”, in N. Necipoğlu (ed.), *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday life*, Köln-Berlin-Leiden 2001, 124, fig. 3; Ousterhout, *Master Builders*, 229-230; C. Striker – I. D. Kuban, *Kalenderhane in Istanbul: The Buildings, their History, Architecture and Decoration*, Mainz 1997, 45, fig. 50 (phase 7th – 8th c.); Th. Macridy, “The monastery of Lips (Fenare Isa Camii) at Istanbul”, *DOP* 18 (1964), 249-315, 260, fig. 23; V. Marinis, *The Monastery tou Libos. Architecture, Sculpture, and Liturgical Planning in Middle and Late Byzantine Constantinople*, Urbana (Ill.), 2004, 104, fig. 54.

⁸⁰ P. Miljkovic-Pepok, *Veljusa. Le monastère de la Vierge de Pitié au village Veljusa près de Strumica*, Skopje 1981, fig. 36.

⁸¹ Bl. Aleksova, “Srednovekovna keramika od Črkvata Sveta Sofija vo Ohrid”, *Glasnik na Instituta za Nacionalna Istorija IV*, 1-2, Skopje 1960, 199-216, 206.

⁸² X. Raurich – M. Pujol – A. Martín – A. Jover – P. Izquierdo – E. Garrido, *Les Sorres X, Un vaixell medieval al Canal Olímpic de Rem (Castelldefels, Baix Llobregat)*, Barcelona 1992, 52; A. Zaragoza Catalan, “Μεσογειακά γοτθικά σταυροθόλια με νευρώσεις”, in *Mediterranean Gothic Architecture/Μεσογειακή γοτθική αρχιτεκτονική* (In Greek with English translation), Athens 2007.

⁸³ Menéndez Fueyo, *La cerámica medieval*, 20.

⁸⁴ Lister – Lister, “The Recycled Pots”, 68.

⁸⁵ Amigues *et al.*, “Los envases cerámicos” (cit. n. 35), 348.

and considers it a very successful technique that improves the stability both of buildings and masonry walls.⁸⁶

The oldest example of the practice identified in Spain is found in Catalonia in the 9th cen., in the free cross-plan type church of Santa Maria de Terrassa in the region of Barcelona, as well as in some churches near Granada (Daragoleja y Gabia La Grande). The southeastern part of Spain, namely the area of Granada, was under Byzantine control, while Visigoths resided further north. The same technique is also encountered later, during the 15th cen., in a number of churches in Catalonia, Seville, Majorca, and the region of Valencia, in which all sorts of pots, urns, jars, jugs, amphorae, cauldrons, chamber pots, lanterns, etc. were used.⁸⁷ In essence, the voids over and between the vaulting extrados served as a grand repository for any pottery that fell into disuse. The number of such findings in Spain in the last 30 years is quite large, and the list of 14th and 15th cen. churches that have been found to have employed this technique keeps growing.⁸⁸ Towards the late 15th and early 16th cen., this technique was transplanted by Andalusian craftsmen and master builders to the New World, Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Puerto Rico.

5. The testimony of related archaeological finds

Numerous sea shells and a few animal bones were also discovered amidst the pottery over the vaulting. This discovery of abundant sea shells but few animal bones testifies to the fact the everyday nourishment of the inhabitants of the area was rather poor in meat, and that it was mainly derived from fishing and not animal-raising.⁸⁹ This comes as no surprise, since the cistern is part of a monastic complex, where abstention from meat consumption would have been the normal state of affairs, given the large number of fasting days, and the overall restraint in food dictated by established monastic practice.

On the contrary, though, some other small archaeological finds –discovered together with the pottery and food remains– inadvertently betray a rather high standard of living, in complete contrast to initial impressions that the meager food remains might convey: a metal heart-shaped belt buckle (**Fig. 15**) found amidst the pottery in Void B, which might have belonged to a high-ranking monk, or even the abbot himself, betrays

⁸⁶ Leon Battista Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria* (1452), The 1755 Leoni edition (reprinted New York 1986), book III, ch. XIV, 59.

⁸⁷ Menéndez Fueyo, *La cerámica medieval*, 21-22.

⁸⁸ Lister – Lister, “The Recycled Pots”, 71.

⁸⁹ Which in many cases testifies to a low standard of living. See Pl. Petridis, “Οικιών και κεραμίων συναγωγή: Τα σπίτια και ο κεραμικός εξοπλισμός τους στην πρωτοβυζαντινή Ελλάδα”, in Yangaki – Panopoulou (eds.), *Το Βυζάντιο χωρίς λάμψη* (cit. n. 17), 19-44, 35.

a certain life of luxury, that contradicts the accounts of humble monastic attire, with only the abbot being exempt from such moderation. This small heart-shaped metal belt buckle accessory must have originally been attached to a belt similar to the one found in the Historical Museum of Pomorie (Anchialos) in Bulgaria, dated to the 13th-15th cen. and considered to be an item imported from Western Europe.⁹⁰ A similar belt has been discovered in Cherson,⁹¹ Crimea.

While monks would be obliged to don the typical monastic or cenobite attire (τό μοναστικόν ἢ τῶν κοινοβίων σχῆμα), the founding documents (*Typika*) of the middle-Byzantine period reveal that each individual monk, depending on his social standing within the community, would be allowed to wear certain insignia that differentiated him from the rest of the brotherhood. In the founding document (*Typikon*) of Theotokos Petritziotissa Monastery of 1083, the founder Kyr Grigorios Pakourianos would dispense different amounts for the attire of each particular monk, with the abbot, first in rank, receiving 36 coins, and the rest receiving lesser amounts of 20, 15, and 10 coins accordingly.⁹² Although the *Typikon* of Nea Moni Monastery has not survived, it is certain that it, too, was included in the class of aristocratic *Typika*, as this was an imperial, independent, self-governed and sovereign monastery; hence, it is safe to assume that its *Typikon* would have similar provisions such as the surviving document for the 11th century Georgian Monastery of Theotokos Petrizonitissa near Bačkovo, in modern day Bulgaria. In the founding document of Pakourianos, inequality in dress was a fundamental fact of life in the monastery.⁹³ In the single case in iconography where a monk is depicted wearing opulent garments, he has the rank of the abbot. In this light, the particular find of the heart-shaped belt application can be interpreted as a precious belt buckle worn either by the abbot or another high-ranking monk in Nea Moni Monastery in Chios in the 15th century.

The table bowl imported from Spain, also found at Nea Moni, attests to the fact that the abbot either personally used such a luxury item from Spain⁹⁴ on his table, or that it

⁹⁰ D. Rabovyanov – K. Krastev, “Late Medieval belt from Historical Museum of Pomorie” (in Bulgarian), in *Simeon’s Bulgaria* (in Bulgarian), Veliko Tirnovo 2018, 289-231, figs. 3, 6.1, 6.2 (from Varna).

⁹¹ V. Zalesskaya, “The artefacts of Byzantine Cherson in their historical and cultural context”, in *The Legacy of Byzantine Cherson*, Sevastopol-Austin 2011, 88-130, in particular 124-125, fig. 225-226.

⁹² P. Gautier, “Le Typikon du sébaste Grégoire Pakourianos”, *REB* 42 (1984), 5-145, in particular 67-69.

⁹³ *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, eds. J. Thomas – Ang. Constantinides Hero, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 35/2, Washington 2000, 513, 534-535.

⁹⁴ J. G. Hurst, “Spanish Pottery Imported into Medieval Britain”, *Medieval Archaeology* 21 (1977), 68-105, 68.

was used when serving food on special occasions, such as the visit of some noble guest, or one of the great feast days of the monastery.⁹⁵ Importing such tableware from Valencia must have incurred a substantial expense, a small fortune in fact, since it has been estimated that the decoration, glazing, transport, commercial profit and taxes would have increased the initial cost of such an item –which was not cheap to begin with– up to 700% or more.⁹⁶ Such items, imported from Italy, and more so from far away Spain, with gold glazing too, would only be used in the residences of the upper, ruling class, to which the abbot of Nea Moni must have undoubtedly belonged. This deep bowl from Valencia region (Paterna) was richly decorated on its interior as well, so that its adornment would be readily visible during the serving of food on the table.⁹⁷

In the year 1511, namely not much later than the introduction of imported Spanish ceramics and their reutilization in the cistern vaulting, Nea Moni appears in a letter addressed to the Doge of Genoa and the Consiglio degli Anziani to be in a state of abject poverty and severely weakened, after the Genoese rulers had deprived it of its best dependencies.⁹⁸ Professor Charalambos Bouras has also convincingly argued that the authors of this letter intentionally disparaged the state of the monastery, and that in reality it did not suffer such poverty and destitution.⁹⁹ The discovery of evidence of luxurious and expensive tableware in Nea Moni in the late 15th century further corroborates Bouras' notion that in reality the monastery enjoyed prosperity and affluence during that time.

In this sense, there must have been adequate room for some extravagance and instances of vanity, and, since the monastery was not cut off from the world, it could afford to import certain luxury items, and first-rate agricultural products. This sort of phenomenon is not unheard of, even in the monasteries of England (namely, Glastonbury Abbey), where luxury tableware was imported from Italy and Spain in the 15th century, intended to be used on special occasions, or for privileged guests in the Abbeys.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ D. Papanikola-Bakirtzis, *Επιτραπέζια και μαγειρικά σκεύη από τη μεσαιωνική Κύπρο*, Nicosia 1999, 4, 11.

⁹⁶ For the cost of ceramics see G. D. R. Sanders, “Είχαν οι απλοί άνθρωποι κεραμικά; Είδη οικοσκευής των πλουσιότερων και των φτωχότερων βαθμίδων της κοινωνίας”, in Yangaki – Panopoulou (eds.), *Το Βυζάντιο χωρίς λάμψη*, 79-107, 92-96.

⁹⁷ Vionis, “Τα ταπεινά αντικείμενα” (cit. n. 17), 66.

⁹⁸ MM III, 260-264, no 17 (10 November 1511).

⁹⁹ At the same period Nea Moni purchases a large Genoese land and has an income of 1000 sterlings a year. Bouras, *Nea Moni* (cit. n. 4), 37.

¹⁰⁰ A. Gutiérrez, “Spanish and Portuguese wares”, in R. Gilchrist – C. Green (eds), *Glastonbury Abbey: Archaeological Excavations 1904 – 1979*, Reading 2015, 8, The finds, 272-273; Hurst, “Spanish pottery (cit. n. 94).

6. The society of Chios in the 15th century and Spanish presence on the island

In the early 14th century, the Genoese came to the forefront of the history of Chios: initially, in 1304, the island was ceded to the Genoese Zaccaria family, who ruled the island until 1329, when Andronikos III Palaiologos reconquered the island at the behest of the Byzantine emperor. Chios was finally lost to the Byzantines in 1346, when Admiral Simone Vignoso again conquered the island in the name of the Republic of Genoa. Genoese rule lasted until 1566, when the island surrendered without a fight to the Ottoman Turks.¹⁰¹

During the Genoese rule, commerce flourished on the island of Chios, and imported commodities such as wheat from Apulia, wine from Calabria, olive oil from Gaeta in south Italy or from Seville, Catalonia or Provence were widely traded. Conversely, mastic, the iconic product of Chios,¹⁰² and alum which would be collected in Chios from the quarries of Lesbos or Phocaea and was destined for Flanders and England, where the major spinning mills of Western Europe were located, were exported from the island. Furthermore, cotton would be sent to Southampton, on ships travelling across the ports of Malaga and Cadiz, silk and indigo dye from the Pera district would be shipped to the markets of the Western Mediterranean, while iron from Genoa and tin would follow the opposite route, towards the Eastern Mediterranean, the new capital of the Ottoman Empire, and the Black Sea.¹⁰³

The considerable prosperity of Chios is also attested in the issuing of coins minted on the island during the two-and-a-half century long Genoese rule.¹⁰⁴ Two specimens of such coins, namely two copper coins (“deniers tournois”),¹⁰⁵ of rather small denomina-

¹⁰¹ W. Miller, “The Zaccaria of Phocaea and Chios (1275-1329)”, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 31 (1911), 42-55; Ph. Argenti, *The Occupation of Chios by the Genoese and their Administration of the Island (1346-1566)*, I-III, Cambridge 1958; M. Balard, *La Romanie Génoise, (XIIe-début du XVe siècle)*, I-II, Rome 1978.

¹⁰² N. Bakirtzis – X. Moniaros, “Mastic Production in Medieval Chios: Economic Flows and Transitions in an Insular Setting”, *Al-Masāq* 31 (2019), 1-25.

¹⁰³ P. Piana Toniolo, *Notai Genovesi in Oltremare, Atti rogati a Chio da Gregorio Panissaro (1403-1405)*, Genova 1995, 13.

¹⁰⁴ D. Promis, *La zecca di Scio durante il dominio dei Genovesi*, Atti dell’ Accademia Reale delle Scienze di Torino 2, 23, Torino 1865; G. Shlumberger, *Numismatique de l’ Orient Latin*, Paris 1878; P. Lambros, *Μεσαιωνικά νομίσματα των δυναστών της Χίου*, Athens 1886; G. Lunardi, *Le monete delle colonie Genovesi*, Genova 1980; D. M. Metcalf, *Coinage of the Crusades and the Latin East in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, London, 2nd edition, 1995; A. Mazarakis, *Τα νομίσματα της Χίου*, Athens 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Coins no 2 (Void A) and no 6 (Void D). No 2 (Inv. BMX/N 1971): Obverse: Cross. Inscription: + CONRADVS REX R. Reverse: Divided in four sections: the Giustiniani coat-of-arms and the Church of Tours. Inscription: CI[vitas Ch]II. Initials of Podestà: B - I. No 6 (Inv.

tion and value that were used for everyday transactions between the years 1496 (**Fig. 16**) and 1498-1507 (**Fig. 17**), were discovered in the terrace roof of the cistern, in the same context as the aforementioned Spanish pottery.

The close relations that Chios enjoyed with Spain are evident in a number of sources: it is well known that the city of Genoa had branched out to the Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula, and had acquired significant trade posts there (e.g., Barcelona, Valencia, Majorca, etc.).¹⁰⁶ Conversely, many Spanish people start to appear in notary deeds drafted in Chios during the two centuries of Genoese rule, and particularly in the time period that concerns us, namely the late 15th century: there are accounts of the Spaniard Gabriele de Saragosa, “*Aragonus*”, purchasing aromatic herbs from Chios for the production of medicine in 1471.¹⁰⁷ In the same year, contracts are drafted in Chios by notary Antonio Foglietta, and signed by the Jew Moses from Catalonia, Diego (identified as an “*yspanus*”) from Seville, and Ludovicus from Palma.¹⁰⁸

Imported Spanish pottery has been found in all sites that have been excavated on the island of Chios in the last 30 years, both in the city of Chios, and in the countryside. These finds represent all known techniques and variants of Spanish pottery at the height of its development in the 14th and 15th cen., before Italian majolica pottery displaced them, and in turn prevailed in the Mediterranean markets.¹⁰⁹

The practice of purchasing pottery, either new, used or discarded, defective or second-rate, to use as infill in masonry structures and in vaulting, in particular, is mentioned in numerous notary deeds in Spain and Italy: 120 vessels –it is not made clear whether these were new or used– were purchased for the vaulting of the summer palazzo of the Medici in Seravezza in Tuscany. Restoration on the Palazzo unearthed Spanish containers from Paterna, and other amphorae over the vaulting of an addition to the palace from 1561-1563, namely the mid-16th cen. A century earlier, in 1471, Sant’ Ambrogio

BMX/N 1975): Obverse: Cross. Inscription: + CONRADVS REX R. Reverse: the Giustiniani coat-of-arms. Inscription: CIVITAS [Chii]. Initials of Podestà: I. Mazarakis, *Τα Νομίσματα* (cit. n. 104), 198. no 44, 203. no 49 (date: 1498-1507 and 1496, respectively).

¹⁰⁶ R. López, *Storia delle colonie genovesi del Mediterraneo*, Bologna 1938; P. Stringa, *Genova e la Liguria nel Mediterraneo, Insediamenti e culture urbane*, Genova 1982, 50, 57 nn. 47, 250-254; C. Beneš (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Genoa*, Leiden 2018, 513-515.

¹⁰⁷ Argenti, *The Occupation* (cit. n. 101), III, 802.

¹⁰⁸ Argenti, *The Occupation*, III, 803 deed no. 315; 804 deed no 321; 804 deed no 316, respectively. Notarius Antonio Foglietta, deeds from 1460 to 1476.

¹⁰⁹ O. Vassi – P. Valakou, “Western Mediterranean Ceramics on the island of Chios from the 14th to the 16th century”, in P. Petridis – A. G. Yangaki – N. Liaros – E. Bia (eds.), *12th International Congress of AIECM3 on Medieval and Modern Period Mediterranean Ceramics, Athens, 21-27 October 2018. Proceedings*, Athens 2021 (forthcoming).

Monastery in Florence purchased from a pottery workshop 30 broken vessels, at the cost of a third of the intact ones, to be used in the construction of a vault. In 1524 another potter supplied 18 broken vessels for the vaulting of the Salviati residence in Florence, while similar transactions are recorded during the same time in other parts of Italy as well, such as in Rome (in Palazzo Altemps), Bologna, Pistoia and Siena.¹¹⁰

During the time period 1403-1420, in Spain this time, 20 vessels are purchased for the church of Sabadell in the north of Barcelona, and jars for the city of Barcelona itself.¹¹¹ During the first decades of the 15th cen. in Barcelona, useless or misfired pottery are used to fill the voids over the vaulting of several Gothic monuments, and the names of the potters (*ollari*) are recorded in contracts or in the churches' *libres de l'obra*.¹¹² In 1467, contracts record that the authorities issued for purchase by the Cathedral of Seville, the largest Gothic church in the world, broken or useless products of the pottery workshops near the river Guadalquivir, to be used in the construction of the vaulting of the church.¹¹³

In the case of Nea Moni, it is reasonable to assume that the monks procured Spanish pottery vessels from the port of Chios, most probably from some cargo ship which had sold its merchandise and had been left with empty pottery containers. Pottery vessels that at first were used solely as containers (of olive oil, wine, food-stuffs, and even luxury tableware, for example) started to be traded as building material. Spanish research has already confirmed that the trading of empty pottery vessels started to flourish in the region of Valencia since the second third of the 15th century, and that empty pottery was shipped first to various parts of Spain such as Seville, the Balearic Islands, and then to the rest of the Mediterranean, such as Sicily or the coast of north Africa.¹¹⁴ Thus, these also reached the island of Chios, either empty or filled with olive oil or wine.¹¹⁵

The ship that transported the Spanish pottery to the island of Chios was, most probably, Italian and not Spanish, judging from similar known cases in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. A boat from Tuscany was shipwrecked sometime in the late 14th or early 15th century in the strait of Sicily, on a commercial voyage from Spain to the eastern

¹¹⁰ Blake, *Le ceramiche*, 87-88.

¹¹¹ Blake, *Le ceramiche*, 91-92.

¹¹² M. Carmen Riu de Martin, "The *ollers* in late Medieval Barcelona: their work", in Yenişerhilioğlu (ed.), *XIth Congress AIECM2* (cit. n. 16), 149-159.

¹¹³ Lister – Lister, "The Recycled Pots", 73.

¹¹⁴ Menéndez Fueyo, *La cerámica medieval*, 115; Id., "Cerámicas de transporte", 242; Amigues *et al.*, "Los envases cerámicos", 354.

¹¹⁵ Amigues *et al.*, "Les « Emballages céramiques »", 150.

Mediterranean (first Crete, and then Cyprus or Constantinople).¹¹⁶ One hundred luxury tableware vessels were discovered packed inside a tinaja, produced in Valencia. In the Crimea, a ship from Pisa supposedly destined to deliver goods packed in Spanish containers to the cities of the Golden Horde, in the Volga and Don region, was shipwrecked in the gulf of Novyi Svit, near Sudak.¹¹⁷ Naval commerce in the late 15th century in the Aegean Sea was exclusively in the hands of the Italians, Venetians and Genoese. At any rate, there are accounts of Spanish ships docking and loading at the port of Chios in 14th or 15th century notary deeds.

7. Concluding remarks

The Genoese that undertook the rule of the island, first the Zaccaria family that were installed in Chios between 1304 and 1329, and then, the *Mahona of Chios* from 1346 until 1566, did not harm the vested interests of Nea Moni, nor did they attempt to curtail its considerable fortune. Gold-sealed imperial decrees (*chrysovoullon*) by four Byzantine emperors in the 11th, 12th and 13th cen. endowed the monastery with land holdings and other income sources; hence, the monastery ended up being one of the largest and richest landowners on the island, with land holdings and dependencies, not only in the most fertile parts of Chios, but also in Asia Minor and mainland Greece. Throughout its history, the monastery retained numerous monks, and its land holdings and endowment provided the means for it to function seamlessly, unfettered by financial concerns.¹¹⁸

As has already been noted,¹¹⁹ during the late 15th century, the cargo of an Italian – most probably Genoese– ship with useless Spanish pottery was bought by the monks of Nea Moni in order to be used in the vaulting system of the cistern. The reasons that led to the undertaking of radical repair works on the roof of the erected in the years 1043-1049 building, cannot be traced; it could be assumed that the work was deemed necessary after some great, natural or not, disaster, however no such event is witnessed in the 15th century.

The potent repair phase during the Genoese period, as documented by the Spanish vessels, has not yet been revealed in any other building of the monastery complex. The repair of the cistern roof, the removal of the old filling and its replacement with useless

¹¹⁶ F. Agrò, “La circolazione delle *lozas valencianas* nel Mediterraneo Occidentale: il carico di un’ imbarcazione naufragata nel Canale di Sicilia tra la fine del XIVE gli inizi del XV secolo”, in Yenişerhilioğlu (ed.), *XIth Congress AIECM2*, 55-58.

¹¹⁷ Koval, “Spanish ceramics”, 195.

¹¹⁸ Bouras, *Nea Moni*, 30-31, 36-38.

¹¹⁹ Vassi – Faitaki, “Η Κινστέρνα”, 18-19.

Spanish pottery, were actions that were not part of a larger repair program in the monastery. They took place as a rather local intervention, concerning the cistern only, still the cause remains untraced. Another question arises from the fact that only the eastern half of the roof bore empty vessels to relieve the walls of unnecessary loads. Concerning the western half, either no Spanish pots were placed, or they had been removed before an efficacious repair with the remaining voids between the domes being filled with plain earth. In case the second hypothesis stands true, we are still unable to interpret the reason behind the second repair.

The presence of Spanish vessels in the monastery of Nea Moni may be considered as the sum of the survival of old building practices, the dynamics of 15th century interregional trade which was at that time conducted to an unprecedented degree in the enclosed Mediterranean basin, and the development of pottery at an intensive, almost massive rate, leading to the accumulation of deposits. In 15th century Chios, a Roman practice that had survived for centuries and was implemented in the environment of Byzantine tradition was carried out with Spanish means. All this points to a very interesting mixture of common origins, common solutions to building issues, and different political developments, as elements that interacted together with international trade as the catalyst.



Fig. 1. Nea Moni on Chios. General view from the southwest



Fig. 2. Nea Moni on Chios. The interior of the cistern (Photo Archive of Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities of Chios)

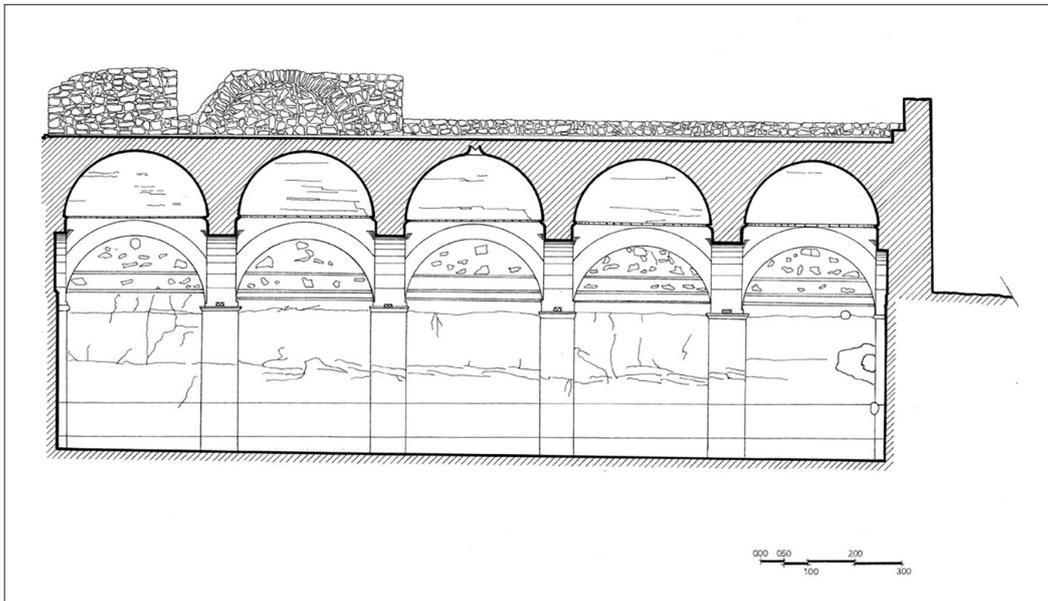


Fig. 3. Nea Moni on Chios. Longitudinal section of the cistern
(drawing George Paschalidis, 1999)

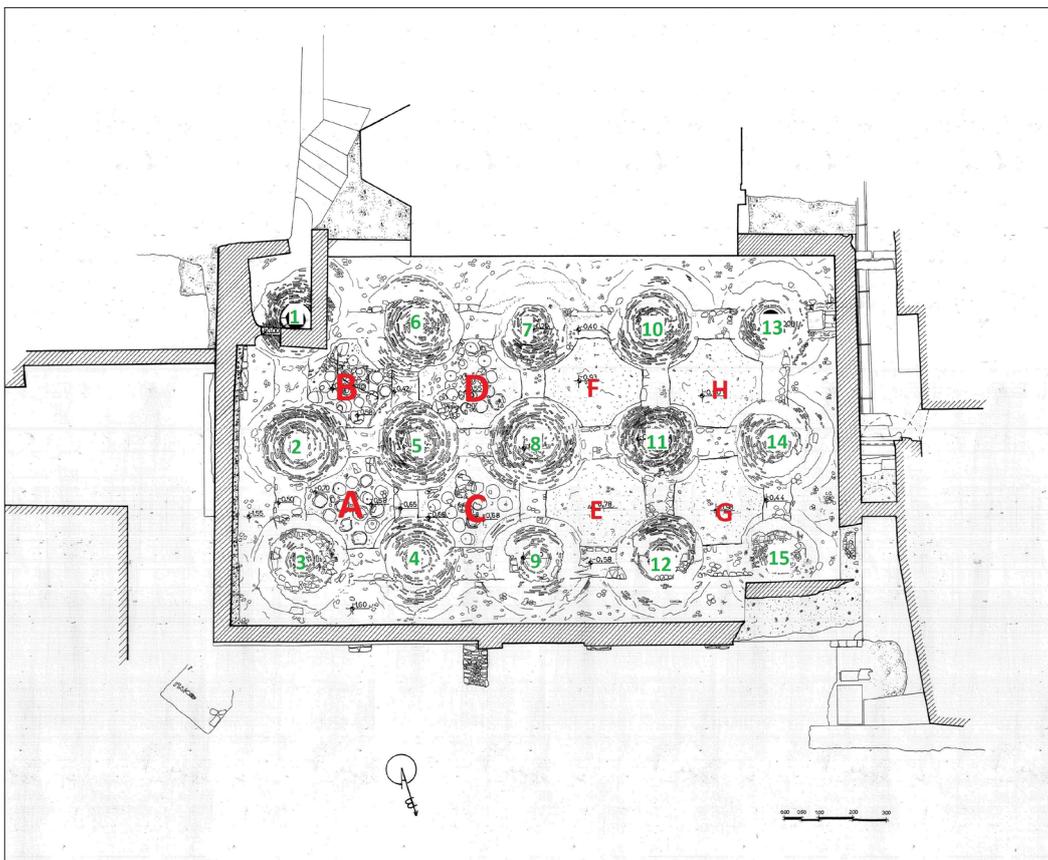


Fig. 4. Nea Moni on Chios. Plan of the roof of the cistern after the excavation works
(drawing Nikos Yannoulakis, 2000)



Fig. 5. Nea Moni on Chios. Vases on the roof of the cistern
(Photo Archive of Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities of Chios)

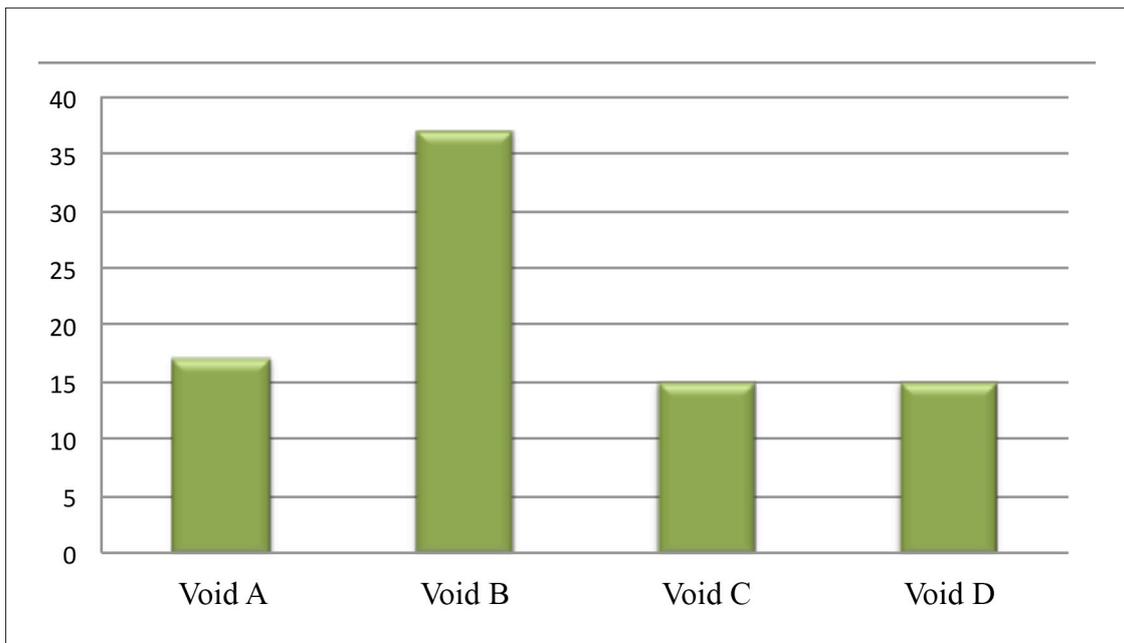


Fig. 6. Nea Moni on Chios. Diagram of vases per void

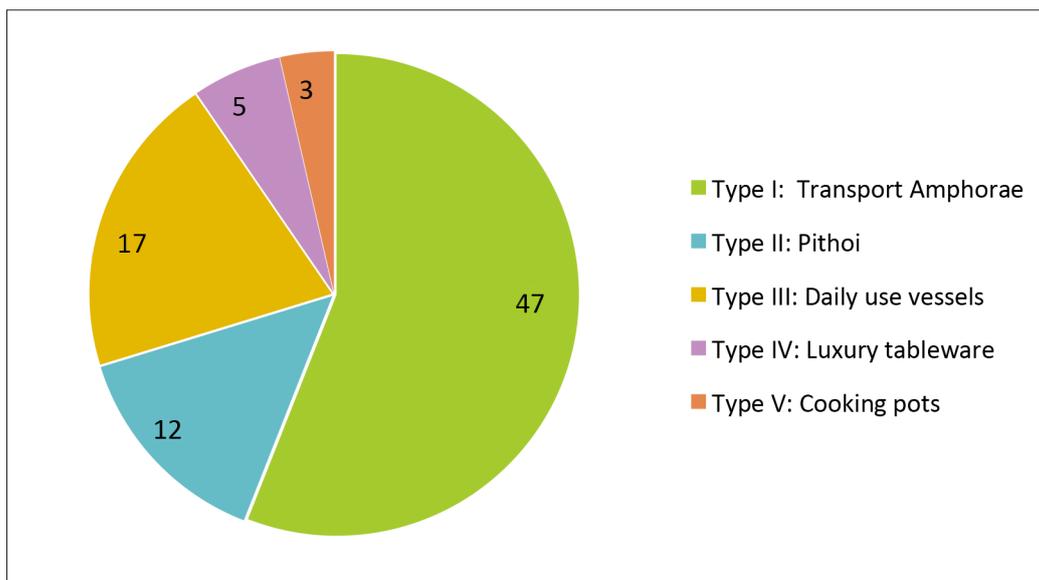


Fig. 7. Nea Moni on Chios. Percentage of types of vessels



Fig. 8. Nea Moni on Chios. Amphora

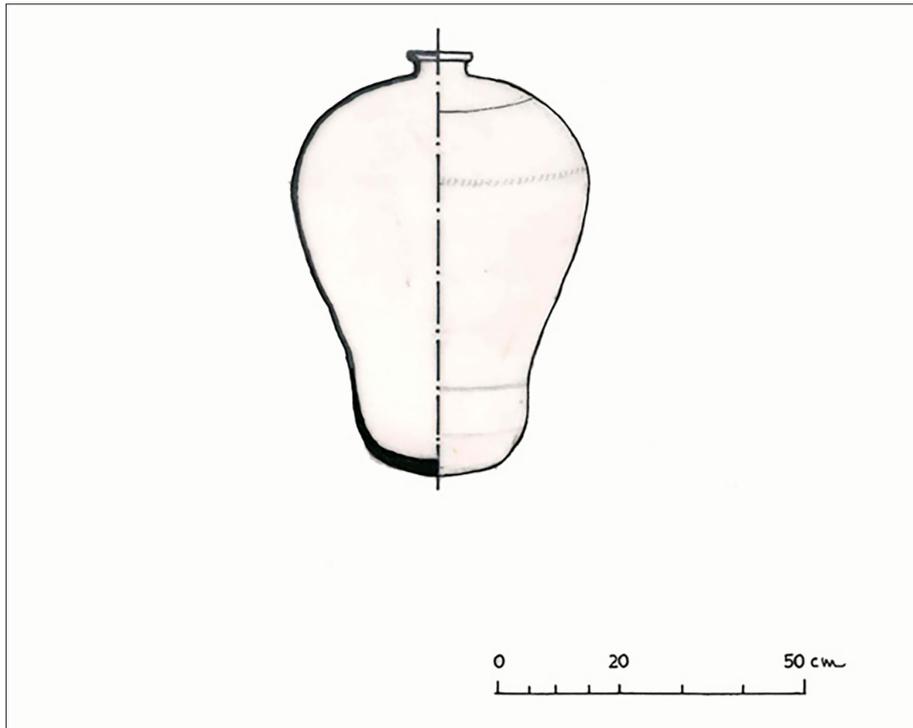


Fig. 9. Nea Moni on Chios. Amphora (drawing Maria Christeli)



Fig. 10. Nea Moni on Chios. Pithos

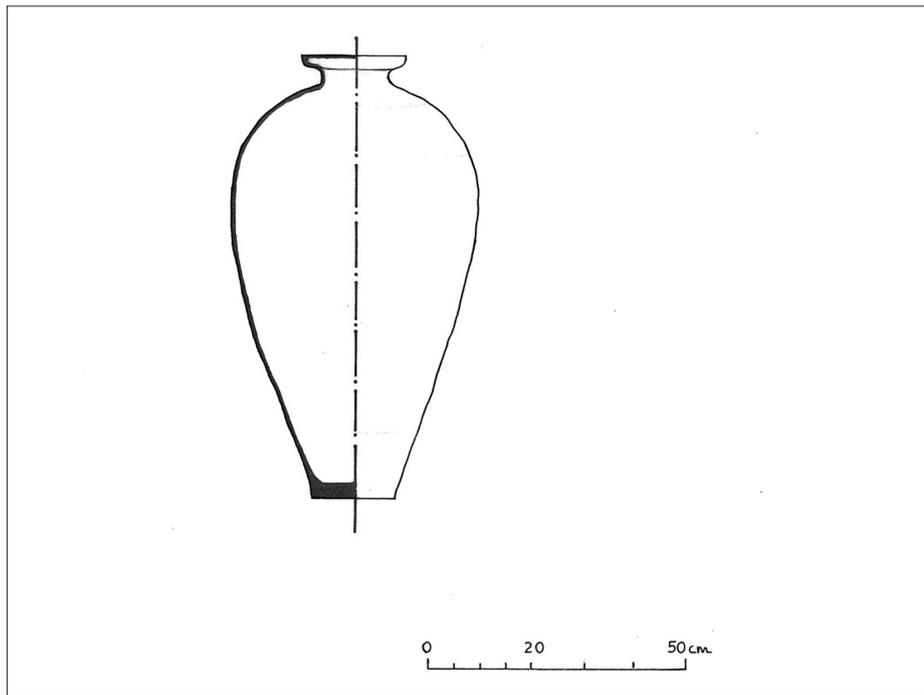


Fig. 11. Nea Moni on Chios. Pithos (drawing Maria Christeli)

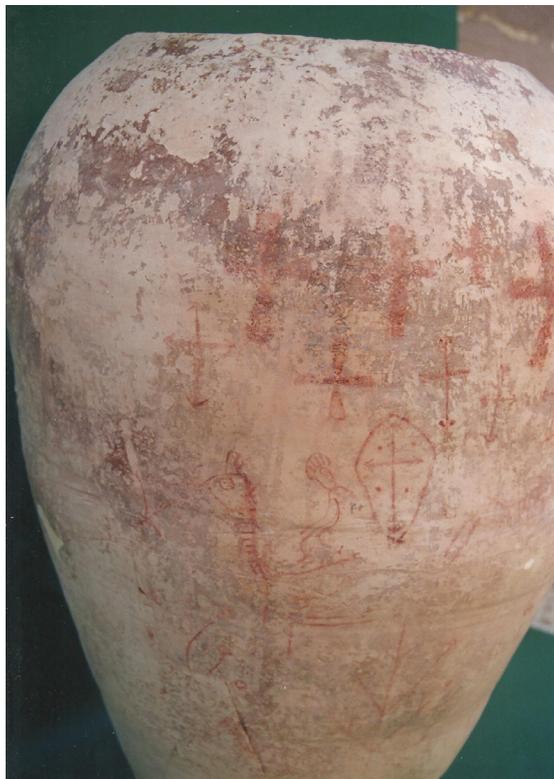


Fig. 12. Nea Moni on Chios. Painted symbols on a pithos



Fig. 13. Nea Moni on Chios. Stamp on a pithos



Fig. 14a. Nea Moni on Chios. Bowl



Fig. 14 b. Nea Moni on Chios. Bowl



Fig. 14 c. Nea Moni on Chios. Bowl



Fig. 15a-b. Nea Moni on Chios. Metal heart-shaped belt buckle



Fig. 16a-b. Nea Moni on Chios. Coin no 2
(Inv. BMX/N 1971)



Fig. 17a-b. Nea Moni on Chios. Coin no 6
(Inv. BMX/N 1975)

