

‘FEATS OF CLAY FROM AEGINA’ A DIACHRONIC INVESTIGATION OF A MAJOR POTTING CENTRE IN THE AEGEAN

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The island of Aegina, situated in a nodal location and bearing extensive deposits of Neogene clay beds and more recent volcanic lavas, has been one of the major potting centres in the Aegean during certain prehistoric and historical periods. Kolonna, the main settlement known on the island, thrived for most of the Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC). Potter’s kilns recovered at the site and the wide distribution of Aeginetan vessels across the central Aegean region indicate the significant role of Aegina as a producer and probably distributor of ceramic products. The range of imports identified further signify the island’s important role in regional exchange networks. This situation is not restricted to the Bronze Age. During the Archaic and Classical periods (mainly 6th-5th c. BC), ample archaeological evidence testify to the island’s prosperity and political role. Aeginetan vessels of that period, mainly cooking pots, reach many sites in central Aegean and beyond, as far as the coast of north Africa, while imported vessels from all known potting centres of the Aegean were consumed at Kolonna. Furthermore, in Modern times, Aegina has been renowned for its water jars that were desired by most traditional Greek households.

In the diachronic investigation of such an important potting centre, its changing role and the radius of its influence, cultural and environmental dynamics need to be considered together. In this context, the aim of the present project has been 1) to characterise Aeginetan ceramic products and their variation, establishing criteria for their identification, 2) to investigate potential raw material sources on Aegina, 3) to reconstruct technological choices of ancient potters and understand differences in fabrics, within and among different periods, shedding light on the island’s technological traditions in different socio-economic and historical contexts, and 4) to determine the range of imported fabrics on Aegina and compare it with data

from other sites in the region to provide a better understanding of the role of Aegina as a recipient and consumer of pottery.

These are achieved through an integrated study involving visual typological and technological examination, petrographic and chemical analysis of pottery from the different periods represented at Kolonna. Such a study of ancient ceramics has been combined with comparative analysis and experimentation of potential raw materials on the island and the investigation of technological choices made by modern traditional potters on Aegina.