

PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION AND TRADE: A TECHNOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC STUDY OF GRAY WARE CERAMICS FROM AIGEIRA DURING HELLENISTIC AND IMPERIAL TIMES

Gray Ware ceramics represent a crucial dataset for understanding both the chronology and technological diffusion associated with Southern Greece becoming part of the Roman world, a politically as well as socially very challenging process during the 2nd and 1st Centuries B.C. Gray Wares are an important aspect of the material record from this time period, but remain drastically understudied. The main aim of research is a technological and economic study of Gray Wares occurring in Hellenistic and Roman contexts from the ancient city of Aigeira (Peloponnese, Greece). Quantifying, cataloguing, categorizing and interpreting the material and its function, chronology and context should help to place it within the broader frame of social and political changes in Aigeira and the geographic region of the Peloponnese during that challenging time period. The study will not only center around known problems of working with Gray Ware – Terminology, Typology and Provenance –, but also strongly complement ongoing research. It is aimed at closing the gap in between by conducting a thorough analysis and interpretation of Hellenistic and Roman type Gray Wares in Greece - studies that are fundamentally lacking so far. Furthermore, the current state of publication does not reflect the actual production, distribution and occurrence of Gray Ware within that time period.

The material itself can be described as wheelmade and partially mold made fine ware ceramics, predominantly open form vessels. The typology and forms seem to have been adopted from popular contemporary shapes in other fine ware categories such as the various black-glazed wares and Early Sigillata, but also show separate innovations and evolutions of shapes, strongly influenced by geographic/regional preference.

These vessels would have been smoothed and coated with a thin slip, often decorated with rouletting and/or stamped motives – sometimes figural – and fired in kilns in a reducing atmosphere, resulting in the clay being gray to brownish/reddish gray and the slip gray to black.

In Aigeira, 391 significant pieces have been recorded between 2011 and 2015. They were found during the excavations of the theatre area conducted by the Austrian

Archaeological Institute (W. Alzinger) in the 1970s and 1980s and have not been published or extensively studied yet. Thus far the contexts suggest a broadly Late Classical to Roman dating.

Preliminary evaluation of the material has shown that the forms present at Aigeira mostly adhere to the known typology – plates, bowls and platters in various dimensions and styles. However, differences can be observed as well (unusual decoration; fusion shapes; characteristics of clay and slip).

Indications of other material (thin-walled ware) ranging within the same time period, findings of produce, potters' inventory, waste and water supply suggest ceramic production was present in the theatre area in Aigeira and part of a strong local economy. Therefore, local production of Gray Ware ceramics seems likely and might be apparent in the form of two recorded misfired pieces.

A catalogue of all recorded pieces has been assembled and will be used to look for comparisons, with emphasis on regional sites and to conduct a thorough technological (macroscopic, etc.) and economic study.

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