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AEGEAN WARE: HOW A TYPOLOGY BECAME INOPERATIVE

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Résumé

L'appellation Aegean Ware est donnée par A.H.S Megaw, en 1975, à un petit groupe de vingt-trois céramiques découvertes dans les fouilles du château de Saranda Kolones à Paphos dans des contextes de la fin XII^e-début XIII^e siècle. Cet ensemble homogène d'un point de vue technique et décoratif est sans doute originaire d'un même atelier que l'auteur localise en Egée. Peu à peu d'autres objets, plus moins semblables, provenant pour la plupart de navires coulés au large des Sporades, dans le golfe d'Eubée et le long la côte d'Asie Mineure, sont venus grossir le groupe initial rendant les identifications d'Aegean Ware plus complexes. Ces coupes partagent des caractéristiques communes avec les types de Paphos mais s'en distinguent parfois par leur pâte, de nouvelles techniques décoratives et des formes plus variées. Cet article tente de montrer comment la typologie mise en place en 1975 est peu à peu devenue obsolète.

Most of the archaeologists working on Byzantine ware know the pottery called Aegean Ware. However I am quite sure that everyone has a different idea of what the Aegean Ware really is. Indeed, today, this term refers to a wide variety of ceramic styles and I therefore wish to draw attention to this category. More broadly, it has to be noted that this example reflects the difficulties we face today in using the old typologies.

Aegean Glazed Ware is the name given by Arthur Megaw in 1975 to a group of dishes excavated from the castle of Saranda Kolones at Paphos (Megaw, 1975, pp. 35-45). They were in use at the time of destruction of the castle by an earthquake in 1222. These 23 bowls formed a homogeneous group sharing the same technical, morphological and stylistic characteristics. They probably came from the same workshop that the author located, without further details, in the Aegean. The initial group, as defined by Megaw, is characterized by a rather coarse fabric often with gritty inclusions, with ranges in color from light reddish brown to red and light purple-red according to the firing. The bowls are rather quickly potted. The forms are open dishes of medium depth with two rim forms: an in-turned beveled and a short horizontal rim with a low ring foot. White slip is applied to the interior surface and usually overlaps the rim. The lead glaze is always yellow, often quite pale and sometimes splashed with green. They were not fired with tripod stilts. Megaw

listed four different decorative techniques. The dishes with a yellow glaze or with a yellow glaze enlivened with green-splashed are not very common (Table 1: 2). The majority of the bowls are decorated with rather coarse incisions and sometimes with green splash (Fig. 1; Table 1: 3). The designs are of two kinds: a central motif within a broad border and a free-field design over the whole interior. Among the most characteristic decorations we find a common border, which consist of multiple concentric circles slashed by a series of oblique incisions, sometimes with added green. The central motifs are made of wavy lines which sometimes look like starfish and five compass-incised circles enclosing a striped square (Table 1: 1). As we will see through the material discovered in a number of shipwrecks located and partly investigated in the Aegean, other tablewares, more or less similar in some aspects, were gradually aggregated to the initial group (Fig. 2). That's why the Aegean Ware has become a multiform set that covers around 100 years, from the second half of the 12th century to the third quarter of the 13th. It is therefore difficult to distinguish, within the published material, wares that are Aegean Wares.

In 1970, a wrecked ship with a cargo of pottery was located near Castellorizo, an island close to the coast of Lycia in Asia Minor. Over one hundred vases were retrieved from the wreck. Most of them are complete and very well preserved (Philotheou and

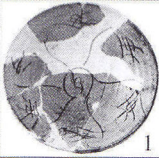





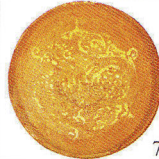
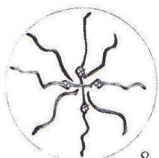
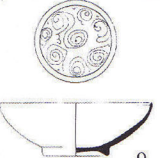
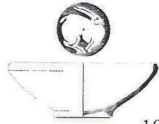
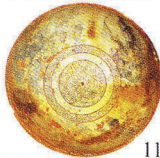


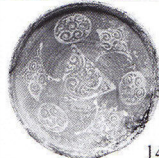
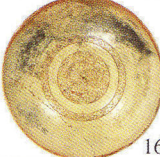



Paphos	 1	 2			 3
Castellorizo	 4	 5	 6	 7	
Skopelos	 8	 9	 10		
Pelagonissos		 11	 12	 13	 14
Silifke		 16	 17	 18	 19

Table 1 Expansion of the Megaw's original types (Paphos, pictures from Megaw, 1975 and François ; Castellorizo, pictures from Papanikola-Bakirtzi, 1999 ; Skopelos, pictures from Armstrong, 1991 ; Pelagonissos, pictures from Papanikola-Bakirtzi, 1999 and Armstrong, 1997 ; Silifke, pictures from François, 2015).



Fig. 1 Aegean Ware from Saranda Kolones Excavation (Paphos Archaeological Museum)

Michailidou, 1986, pp. 271-330). According to their decoration and their shape some of them belong to the type defined by Megaw: the slip ware with green splashed decoration (Table 1: 5) and the incised ware with, as central motif, a kind of octopus or a radiant sun, a bird or a stylized fish (Table 1: 4). The glaze is pale yellow. As in the Paphos group, the fabric is coarse and ranges in color from orange to light reddish and brown red, and the potting of these bowls is

rude. However, in addition to these Megaw's Aegean Wares, other bowls were found in the cargo. Their shapes are different, especially the deep bowl with T shape rim. Also the decorative techniques used are more varied. A smaller number of vases have sgraffito decoration with birds set between chevrons (Table 1: 6); others are decorated with champlévé work depicting scenes of hunting with wild beasts and occupying almost the whole interior surface. The Castellorizo wreck included also pottery with slip painted decoration (Table 1: 7). The body material is the same through all the classes of decoration. The presence, in the sealed context of the shipwreck, of all these categories made apparently with the same fabric, probably indicate that they share a common origin. Thus the group isolated by Arthur Megaw began to expand at the time it started to get diversity. New shapes, new surface treatments and new decorations appeared on ceramics which were probably manufactured in the same workshop.

In 1991, Pamela Armstrong published a part of the collection of byzantine pottery in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (Armstrong, 1991, pp. 335-347).



Fig. 2 Location of Aegean Wares shipwrecks.

Twenty complete glazed bowls came from a shipwreck off the island of Skopelos, one of the Sporades, in the north-west Aegean. There are, among these bowls, various specimens quite identical to those of Paphos (Table 1: 8). Others pieces had some characteristics in common with the Aegean Wares from Paphos, such as the massive heavy shapes, the coarse potting technique and the semi-coarse, dark red or orange to light brown fabric with large inclusions. However they are adorned with different and more sophisticated decorations: an incised hare in a gouged tondo or sgraffito spiral designs in tondo (Table 1: 9, 10). The forms, the designs and the fabric clearly lie within the original definition of Aegean Ware. The author concluded that these bowls should be considered as being also Aegean Wares and in doing so she allowed further expansion of the typology of Megaw.

The Aegean Ware from the initial group to which may be added the Castellorizo and Skopelos discoveries, also shares a number of characteristics with the ceramics collected in a third wreck located in the Sporades, off the island of Alonessos. In 1970 the General Directorate of Antiquities and Restoration undertook the salvage of the Byzantine shipwreck of Pelagonesos in the Northern Sporades. Its cargo included 768 tablewares found intact or almost intact (Kritzas, 1971, pp. 176-182; Ioannidaki-Dostoglou, 1989, pp. 157-171). They are made of fine, red fabric and covered, on both sides, by a very thin layer of white slip. We find, in this cargo, the same forms as those of the Aegean Wares from Paphos, Castellorizo and Skopelos, but also, and this is new, very low bowls with a broad rudimentary ring. The decoration consists of medallions containing intricate spirals, birds of prey and sophisti-

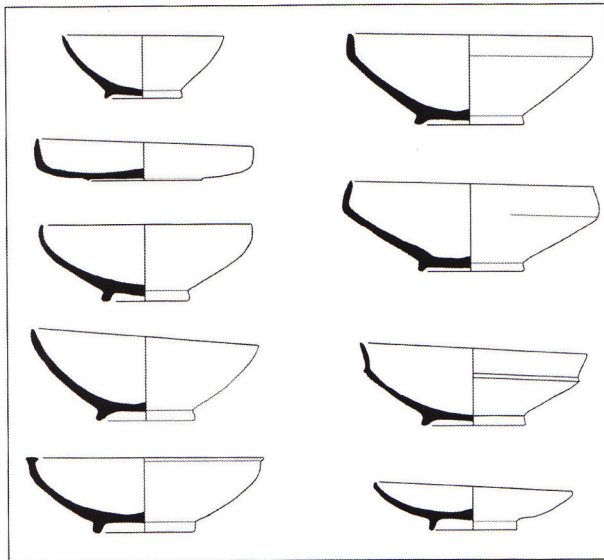


Fig. 3 Main forms of the Janet Zakos Aegean Ware collection.

cated painted slip motifs as found on the bowls of the Skopelos shipwreck (Table 1: 11-14). There were also, and this is new too, Green Glazed Sgraffito wares and Painted Sgraffito wares (Table 1: 15). Once again, the group isolated by Megaw increased.

Another group consists of 73 bowls very well preserved and discovered in a shipwreck off the coast of Antalya or Silifke. These pieces are part of the Janet Zakos donation to the Museum of Art and History of Geneva (François, 2015, pp. 201-271). This tableware has irregular and asymmetrical walls that reflect a crude potting – it is not unusual to note a significant gap of 2 cm in height from one side to the other as is also the case on the Castellorizo bowls (Fig. 3). On most of these ceramics, a sort of groove appears outside the body. This is a trace of tool identical to that observed by Megaw on Aegean Ware from Paphos. The fabric, orange in color, is more or less coarse, with white inclusions. The bowls are covered with a thin layer of white slip on the internal and external surfaces, even below the low ring foot. The lead glaze ranges from colorless to light yellow, less frequently green. The forms are more diverse than those usually represented in the Aegean Ware. All these bowls, roughly made, are carefully decorated with various techniques. The geometric and figurative decoration is worked in fine sgraffito (Table 1: 16). The pigeons, birds of prey, waders and lions are surrounded by large, wild and winding palms, leaves and various branches, as well as chevrons and spiral garland as found on the Castellorizo and Pelagonnissos bowls (Table 1: 18). The decoration is also rendered by sgraffito green and brown painted motifs and champlévé technique (Table 1: 17, 19).

We can complete this overview with the findings of two other wrecks identified during surveys and which contained Aegean Wares : the first is off Kavalliani, in the South Euboean Gulf (Koutsouflakis, Argiris, Papadopoulou, Sapountzis, 2012, pp. 40-69; Koutsouflakis and Tsompanidis, 2015 in this volume) and the second, off Adrasan (Doğer and Özdaş, 2016, pp. 445-463). Its cargo contained the Paphos bowl, the incised birds and the champlévé lions similar to those of the Pelagonnissos, Castellorizo and Silifke's bowls.

The underwater remains from Castellorizo, Pelagonnissos, Skopelos, Silifke shipwrecks are more or less similar in some aspects to the Aegean Ware from Paphos excavation¹. They differ by a greater variety of shapes and decorative techniques as Sgraffito, Brown and Green painted sgraffito, champlévé, Slip painted and blobs of green color with colorless or pale yellow glaze. This composite category is characterized by several types of fabric; a more or less coarse potting that suggests a mass production; a thin layer of white slip usually applied to the internal and external surfaces.



Fig. 4 A wide range of Aegean Ware in the Archiepiskopi Excavations, Nicosia (François).

In this presentation, I limited myself to the pottery discovered in shipwrecks that are sealed contexts but such associations also appear in land excavations. For example in the medieval levels of the Archiepiskopi excavation in Nicosia where I found all the categories recognized in the shipwrecks and apparently

¹ Other unprovenanced Aegean Wares, coming from maritime environment, are stored in various museum collections in Turkey (Istanbul Archaeological Museum, Izmir Archelogical Museum, Antalya Museum, Bodrum Museum, Fethiye Museum, Marmaris Museum). However, the context of the finds is unclear. The tableware must have come from more than one shipwreck in the area between Antalya and Bodrum.

made with the same clay² (Fig. 4). According N. Poulou and B. Böhlendorf-Arslan, in land excavations conducted in Greece and Turkey, the fine sgraffito Aegean type is associated with champlévé specimens only at the end of 12th century through the first decades of 13th century.

All this makes the identification process of Aegean Ware even more complex. It is clear today that this name no longer refers to a single category of objects but a less homogeneous group that seems to have several origins. Until recently, the multifaceted studies of ceramics have failed to locate the producing centers. Many hypotheses concerning their origin were expressed by archaeologists. They attributed the Aegean Ware's production to the workshops of Cyprus, Çanakkale, Phocaea or Corinth. The recent archeometric study of ceramic samples no longer supports these hypotheses. Chemical analysis of 30 fragments originating from Kouklia and Paphos excavations in Cyprus, from Cherson in Crimea, from Tell Arqa in Lebanon and from Pergamon in Turkey suggest a possible common origin for various categories including champlévé ware, Sgraffito ware, Painted Incised Sgraffito Ware, Slip-Painted ware, Green and/or Brown painted Ware and Aegean Wares of the original group (Waksman and von Wartburg, 2006, pp. 369-388). They constitute a very homogeneous set, probably manufactured in the same workshop or in a group of workshops located in the same geological region and using very similar clays. It is possible to add to this set, ten fragments decorated in champlévé, Sgraffito, Brown and Green Painted Sgraffito from the Louvre Museum (François, 2017, pp. 67-72). The samples, analyzed by Anne Bouquillon, show a good agreement with Yona Waksman's group (Bouquillon, 2017, pp. 315-317). They share similar chemical compositions. The analysis conducted by the Louvre Museum also confirms the existence of a large repertoire of decorative techniques used by the same workshop. The fragments of the Louvre collection and those analyzed by Waksman therefore share a common origin. According to another archeometric study, they were manufactured at Chalcis in Evia (Waksman, Kontogiannis, Skartsis, Todorova and Vaxevanis, 2014, pp. 379-422). However, this workshop in Evia was not the only production center for this type of pottery. Indeed, according to its chemical composition, a bowl from the Camalti Burnu shipwreck in the Sea of Marmara, typical of Megaw's Aegean Ware, has a different fabric from the group of Chalcis (Günsenin, 2001, p. 368, fig. 10 a-b;

Waksman and von Wartburg, 2006, pp. 381-382). This deep bowl could thus be attributed to another workshop. Moreover, a number of Aegean Ware biscuits, found in the Stoa of Hadrian excavations in Sparta, could testify that a local production existed (Sanders, 1993, 261 n° 10, pl. 23; 266, n° 26, fig. 6). Clearly there were several workshops for these type of tableware sold across the whole Mediterranean – the shipwrecks are an indicator of the sea trade route along the southern coast of Anatolia and the South Euboean Gulf.

Today we use the general designation Aegean Ware regardless of the complex character of the group. All the examples I presented here differ in style and technique of decoration but there also exist obvious similarities of form, fabric and designs. That is why the typology established by A. Megaw in 1975, confronted with the recent findings, and their scientific exploitation, has reached its limits. It formed the backbone of the discipline and the subsequent searches were building on but it's now time to break free and find a better definition.

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