

The *pithos* production of Ainos during the Ottoman period

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ABSTRACT

The present study focuses on the pithos production of Ainos and its distribution in the Aegean Sea during the Ottoman period. Ainos (Turkish: Enez) was one of the major economic and commercial centers of the Northern Aegean throughout antiquity on the eastern bank of the Evros River delta. During the Byzantine and Ottoman periods, it developed a great maritime power, controlling the entire transit trade of Thrace and the Balkans. The town traded in a variety of goods, but it was most famous for its storage pithoi, which were large and extremely durable and thus ideal for storing olive oil. The Ainian pithoi, with their characteristic keel-shaped –almost biconical– body, as well as their relief, stamped or incised decoration on the shoulder, were transported to almost all the coasts and islands of the Aegean, but also to the interior of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. One of the earliest samples dates to the first half of the 18th century, but there is strong evidence that the pithos production of Ainos probably dates back to the 16th century, if not earlier.¹

1. INTRODUCTION

The Greek word *pithos* (plural: *pithoi*) refers to large ceramic jars used mainly for bulk storage. Papathanasi-Mousiopoulou (1980, 108–18), who based her research in the late 1970s on four oral testimonies, provides some evidence about the potters of Ainos. For many years, even the scientific community believed that Ainian *pithoi* were produced in Lesbos (Fig. 1), due to their abundance on the island, which was a major producer of olive oil in the Northern and Eastern Aegean. Korre-Zografou (1995, 279) speaks of these *pithoi* with admiration, initially attributing them to the production of Mytilene (Lesbos), which had a thriving economy during the 19th century, as well as a prosperous community of oil merchants and soap manufacturers. However, she questions the origin of the *pithoi* from Lesbos due to the absence of *pithos* workshops on the island. Instead, she considers Mytilene to be a center of transit trade, suggesting that the jars probably come from the opposite coast of Asia Minor (Korre-Zografou 1995, 279), which is another incorrect assumption.

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Fig. 1. Map of the Aegean Sea region with the places named in the paper.

The discovery of a large Ainian *pithos* without a neck, known as “*sfida*” by the locals, in the village of Kosmio, Komotini, is noteworthy (Figs. 1–2) (Kyriazopoulos 1991, 207, 217). The name “*sfida*” also refers to the small storage vessel used in Lesbos for oil or oil cheese, having a maximum capacity of 100 okes (about 130 liters) (Fig. 3). We believe that the type of this vessel has an Ainian origin, due to its distinctive keel-shaped form, as well as the impressed decoration made by rhomboid stamps and cylinder seals. The Athanasiades family of potters, which was one of the first that spread the type, relocated from Asia Minor to Filia of Lesbos at the end of the 19th century (Raptopoulos 2005, 5, 7, 19–20). Thus, *sfida* came probably from Asia Minor, and it represents so far the most distinctive “imitation” of an Ainian *pithos* in another workshop.

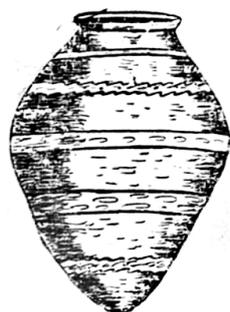


Fig. 2. “Sfida” jar from Komotini, Thrace (Kyriazopoulos 1991, p. 217, fig. 6).

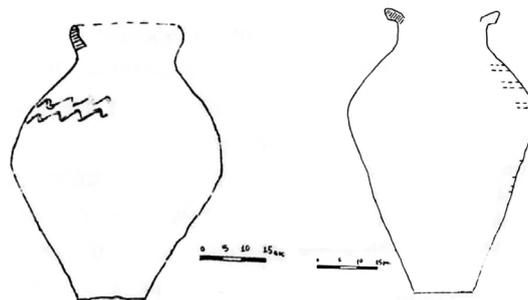


Fig. 3. “Sfida” jars from Filia, Lesbos (Raptopoulos 2005, pp. 20, 22).

Our study was based on both field research and photographic material, with the assistance of folk and ethnological museums and the local Ephorates of Antiquities of the Greek Ministry of Culture. Ainian *pithoi*, which are impressive in size and structure, may still be seen in a few locations in Ainos, including the main square, residential courtyards and the outdoor areas of university residence halls. The largest sample –more



Fig. 4. Ainian *pithoi* in private houses, Thasos.



Fig. 5. Ainian *pithoi* in oil presses, Thasos.

than 700 *pithoi*— comes from the island of Thasos in the Northern Aegean (Fig. 1) (Papadopoulos and Pentoti 2017 for detailed presentation). The forms recognized here were identified with numerous *pithoi* from other Aegean islands, the Asia Minor coasts, and the eastern parts of Greece.

The primary issues that arose throughout our research of this significant amount of *pithoi* were mainly the following:

1) Access was difficult because the majority of the *pithoi* were discovered in private places, such as residences and oil presses (Figs. 4–5). As a result, their recording, photographing, drawing and studying were impeded.

2) The structural and ornamental elements of the *pithoi*, such as inscriptions, monograms, dates and decorative patterns, were destroyed due to the frequent application of paint or lime on their outer surface (Fig. 6).

3) There are very few bibliographical resources available on the subject, as is the case for the entire *pithos* production in the Northern Aegean throughout the Ottoman period. When we first started our research, we discovered that there were very few bibliographical references about the potters of Ainos and the typology and characteristics of their *pithoi*, but essentially no evidence regarding the technology and the distribution of the vessels.



Fig. 6. Ainian *pithoi* from Aegina and Thasos islands with lime and paint on their outer surface.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AINOS

Built on four hills on the eastern bank of the Evros River delta, the town of Ainos (Greek: *Aἴνος*, Latin: *Aenus*, Turkish: *Enez*), is located on the Aegean shore of the Province of Edirne, formerly known as Adrianople or Hadrianopolis (Greek: *Ἀδριανούπολις*). Although today it is located 4.5 km from the coast, it was once a coastal town and a significant port for centuries, serving as a physical bridge between Asia and Europe, commercially linking the Balkans with the East and the Aegean Sea (Fig. 1).

Modern-day Ainos was founded on the ruins of the ancient city. The results of the excavations conducted by the University of Istanbul under the supervision of Professors A. Erzen and S. Başaran prove the historical continuity of the town from the time of its founding to the present day. In the nearby Hoca Çesme tomb, Prof. Özdoğan (1999, 217–19; 2001) also revealed Neolithic settlement remains, dating to the middle of the 7th millennium B.C., which are one of the oldest permanent agricultural settlements in the area (Karul and Bertram 2005; Başaran 2010).

According to Herodotus and Thucydides, Ainos was founded in the 7th century B.C. as an Aeolian colony of Alopekonesos and later of Mytilene and Cyme (Her. 7.58.3; Thuc. 7.57.5), while the same information is also mentioned in Homer's *Iliad* (Il. 4.520). We know from other ancient literary sources that before the founding of the city, there were two Thracian settlements in the area, *Polty(o)mbria* and *Absinthos* (Str. 7.319.1; Pseudo-Apoll. *Libr.* 125.2; Steph. Byz. v. *Ainos*).

With its remarkable prosperity during antiquity, Ainos rose to prominence as one of the major economic and commercial centers of the Northern Aegean. It was a member of the Delian League, also known as the First Athenian League, for a long period of time, developing strong political, economic and cultural relations with Athens since the early 5th century B.C. In the middle of the 4th century B.C., it came under the power of Philip II of Macedon and later under the control of the heirs of Alexander the Great: at first the Seleucids of Syria and then the Ptolemy of Egypt. After the conquest of Thrace by the Romans, Ainos was integrated to the eastern part of the Roman Empire. During the Byzantine period, it was one of the biggest regional centers of Thrace, being the capital of the Rhodope Province. From the middle of the 14th century, during the last period of the Byzantine Empire, it came under the rule of the Houses of Gattilusi and Doria of the Republic of Genoa, until its conquest by the Ottomans in 1456.

By the 15th century, Ainos was regarded as one of the most advanced maritime Greek towns of Thrace, due to the Evros River, the largest river in the Northern Aegean, which is navigable to its major part and has served

Figs. 7–8. Ainian *pithoi* from Thasos.

as a vital commerce route since antiquity. The town had two ports, one marine and the other fluvial. It controlled the entire transit trade between the Black Sea and the Balkans, serving for centuries as the primary gateway from the Thracian mainland to the Aegean Sea and the only node for the transportation of goods in the Eastern Mediterranean markets.

According to written sources, Ainos had a naval merchant fleet of up to 300 ships in the early 19th century – around 1820–1830 (Mystakidis 1929, 49)– which often travelled as far as Syria and Alexandria, even Trieste and Marseille (Skiadas 2017). However, in the middle of the same century, the town began to decline. The lagoon to the south of Ainos, which was called in Greek *Pontismene* (i.e., sunken, submerged), was gradually transformed into a swamp by the deposits of sludge from Evros and became shallow and inappropriate for ships to approach. The completion of the railway connection between Istanbul and Thessaloniki at the end of the 19th century, on the other hand, turned the import and export trade of Thrace to the newly founded city of Dedeğaç, nowadays known as Alexandroupolis.

By the end of the 19th century, Ainos traded tobacco, wool, leather, cereals, lumber for ships, caviar, salted fish –the famous smoked mullets called *likourinoi* or “*nitika*” (i.e., from Ainos)– but also two species over which it held a monopoly: high-quality salt and leeches, used for therapeutic and medical purposes, for blood-lettings. It is characteristic that the historian Michael Critobulus (also known as Critobulus of Imbros, c. 1410 – c. 1470) writes that the town “*collects gold and silver*”, referring to the presence of the large salt pans located on the mainland of Ainos (*History* 2.11.7).

The city was also noted for its fine wines since antiquity (Giannakidou 2003). The vine and the grape bunch are depicted on bronze and silver coins of Ainos during the 4th and 3rd c. B.C. (Münzer and Strack 1912, 168 n. 296, 182 n. 346, 192 n.381; May 1950, 348a–b, 349, 375, 377a, 380), as is also the case with the coins of other wine-producing regions of Thrace (Avdera, Maroneia, Chersonissos, Mende).

However, the most famous products of Ainos were its huge storage jars (*pithoi*). These vessels, notable for their size and solidity, were ideal for storing olive oil. They were distributed to various oil-producing regions of Greece, the Asia Minor coast, and the Southeast Balkans, with the largest quantities ending up to the islands of Thasos and Lesbos (Figs. 7–8).

3. PITHOS WORKSHOPS IN THE AEGEAN

Among the numerous and dispersed centers of traditional pottery in the greater Aegean Sea region, we will briefly refer to the few that produced large storage jars. These operated in the Messenian Gulf (Peloponnese), in Crete, in Chios, in Cyprus and, of course, in Ainos, and were in full bloom from the Ottoman period until about

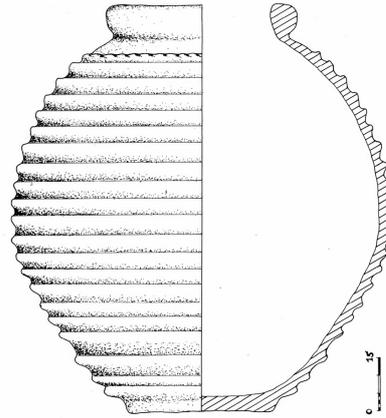


Fig. 9. *Pithoi* from the Koroni region, Messenia, Peloponnese (drawing by N. Liaros; Archive of the Centre of the Study of Modern Ceramics, Athens, Greece).

Fig. 10. *Pithos* from Thrapsano, Crete, at the Centre of the Study of Modern Ceramics, Athens, Greece.



Fig. 11. *Pithoi* from Phini, Cyprus (detail from a postcard: Archive of the Centre of the Study of Modern Ceramics, Athens, Greece; Local Ethnographic Museum of Geroskipou, Paphos, Cyprus).

the middle of the 20th century (Fig. 1). The region of Koroni was one of the major centers for the production of storage jars in the Messenian Gulf, not only in Greece, but throughout the Mediterranean (Fig. 9) (Blitzer 1990; Giannopoulou 1998; 2002). The village of Thrapsano, Herakleion, was the most significant *pithos* production center in Crete (Fig. 10). The Cypriot production is immediately identifiable in the monumental dimensions of its spherical *pithoi*, intended exclusively for wine and produced in the village of Phini (Fig. 11).

Traditionally, during the summer and autumn months –i.e. from May to September/October– potters in these areas used to leave their homes and travel in small groups, setting up their workshops in different locations to dispose of their production. *Pithos* makers from the Peloponnese, in particular, traveled to the Eastern Aegean islands, such as Lesbos, and reached even Cyprus (Kyriazopoulos 1984, 62). In Crete, the process of organizing and operating the seasonal workshop was called “*vendema*”, from the Venetian word “*vendemmia*”, which means harvest (Voyatzoglou 1972, 9; Psaropoulou 1985–1987, 177).

The movement of jar makers for seasonal employment was a common practice, as the transportation of *pithoi* was a very hard and time-consuming process, and the road network in the 18th and 19th centuries was rudimentary (Giannopoulou 2010, 53). Thus, potters preferred to relocate, even though they had to stay away from their families for several months.



Fig. 12. *Pithoi* from Chios (Liaros 2016, p. 61, Pl. 2, detail).

Although we do not have reliable evidence that the potters of Ainos were on the move, it appears that in the early 20th century Ainian *pithos* makers started to move to neighboring locations, such as Thasos, in order to satisfy the requests of the local communities (Giannopoulou 2010, 53). Most of them settled as refugees in Alexandroupolis in 1923, reopening their workshops, after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne. However, we do not know until today Ainian ceramics or *pithoi* that were produced there. According to Ainian refugees, some of their compatriots had already travelled to Thasos between 1915 and 1919 (personal communication with D. Politou). In addition, names of Ainians are found in lists of migrant populations from Asia Minor and Eastern Thrace to Thasos during 1922–1923 (Dialektopoulos 2017).

At least until 1940, the large Cretan *pithoi* from the Thrapsano region were produced almost exclusively in these seasonal workshops and were not exported outside Crete, but rather were intended only for the local market (Voyatzoglou 1972, 1984; Day 2004; Liaros 2016). *Pithoi* from the Koroni region, on the other hand, were exported by the jar makers themselves or the traders to various regions of the Mediterranean and the Adriatic Sea, either by sailing boats or by beasts of burden and carriages via central markets or festivals. The unique quality of their material, as well as the potters' technical skill –who “built” the jars entirely by hand– were responsible for their exceptional durability. The superb –functionally and aesthetically– spherical wine jars from Cyprus, which had a diameter of almost 1.40 m, were also completely handmade (Violaris 2018).

A special mention should be made on the *pithos* production of Chios, which flourished much earlier, already since the beginning of the 18th century –although it dates back to at least the 17th– and ceased in the early 19th century after the destruction of the island, in 1822. “1643” is the oldest chronology on a Chian *pithos* that has been so far documented (Liaros 2016, 61, 67). After the slaughter of the island, the coarse *pithoi* of Chios were displaced by those of Koroni and Ainos.

The finding of the Chian *pithoi* exclusively on Chios island implies that these vessels, like those in Crete, were not exported. Made entirely by hand, these jars were intended for local consumption and stored a variety of products (Fig. 12). Of course, most of the workshops throughout the Aegean produced smaller storage jars, but these were still much smaller in size than *pithoi*. They were manufactured differently than the other vessels in the workshop, and they were meant to be used for the preservation of various foods, and very rarely olive oil.

4. THE POTTERS' GUILD AND THE *PITHOS* WORKSHOPS OF AINOS

The origins of the guild institution have been lost to time. They date as far back as the ancient Greek unions and associations, which were followed by the Roman *collegia corpora*, the Byzantine *systems* and the medieval guilds, arranged in accordance with the symposiums of ancient tectons and with Greek-Roman models. The ancient Greek society and economy fostered a sense of cooperation and companionship, which was systematically organized through the Byzantine *systems*. The organization of guilds served the professional interests of the members, but primarily the overarching objectives of state economic policy (Papadopoulos 2019, 193 with bibliography).

As *pithos* manufacture in Ainos gradually grew into a minor industry, a unique guild of potters and jar makers emerged and eventually amassed immense wealth. The guild was protected by Saint Vlassios and was closely associated with that of the sailors. The majority of potters resided in the district of Saint Nicolas, patron saint of sailors, rather than in the district of Saint Vlassios, where all of the inhabitants were sailors instead. According to the local tradition, the two guilds exchanged the icons of their patron saints and the names of their churches. Therefore, the district of the potters hosted the church and the icon of St. Nicolas, while the district of the sailors hosted the church of Saint Vlassios (Kalinderis 1973, 48). However, it is certain that potters were also associated with Saint Cyprianos, who is considered the patron saint of the pottery art in several ceramic production centers (Lampakis 1908, 21; Samidis 1929, 282; Samothrakis 1944, 30; Papathanasi-Mousiopoulou 1980, 116).

An inscription in Greek on the lintel of Saint Vlassios temple in Ainos, which was originally built in 1420/21 for St. Nicolas, claims that the church was thoroughly renovated in 1839 at the expense and the supervision of the potters' guild (Lampousiadis 1941, 121; Papathanasi-Mousiopoulou 1980, 116; Korre-Zografou 1995, 152; Kladara 2011). Therefore, we assume that since the early 19th century there was already a strong guild of jar makers, and a portion of their earnings was spent toward building and repairing schools and churches, as well as supporting the needs of the hospital and the orphanage of the town.

The workshops of Ainos were situated in the western part of the town near the Evros estuaries, in the area of *Tsoukalaria* (Hasluck 1908/1909, 252), i.e., pottery workshops (Fig. 13). This is where the old port of Ainos was located, onto the Evros Delta, before being abandoned due to the aggradations of the river. At this place, cleats are preserved even today, i.e. rings for mooring boats that carried the products of the *pithos* workshops in the Aegean and the Balkans (Perrakis 2011, 6). The workshops had to be built at a considerable distance from the residences for public health reasons, as the chimneys released dense smoke during the firing, particularly in the early phases of the process.

The kind of vessels produced determined the structure and layout of the workshops, which were typically the same throughout the Aegean. A typical workshop included: 1) a rectangular workspace under roof with windows and one or two door openings; 2) outdoor spaces with tanks or cavities for preparing clay and level areas for drying the vessels; 3) additional storage areas for foods, tools, and wood; and 4) a furnace for firing the vessels, which is why the workshop was often referred to as *kamini* (i.e. kiln).

The equipment of the workshops is supplemented with portable utensils or permanent structures, such as strainers, hand mills and, on occasion, smaller furnaces for small vessels. The workshops and related facilities were often built by the potters themselves. The vast majority of the working team members are men, who are bound together by an unwritten but customary code imposed by their guild (Voyatzoglou-Sakellaropoulou 2009, 21). In contrast to some regions in Turkey, Syria and Cyprus, where pottery was primarily a female activity, potters in Messenia and Crete were also men. Workshops that specialized in the production of large-dimension storage vessels, it is possible that presented more morphological similarities among themselves.

Unfortunately, information regarding the form of the workshops of Ainos is not available from either written sources or oral testimonies. The only evidence available is a photograph of the "*Ainian craft industry of the potters*" that shows artisans and workers in an outdoor workshop space (Fig. 14). The potters are gathered

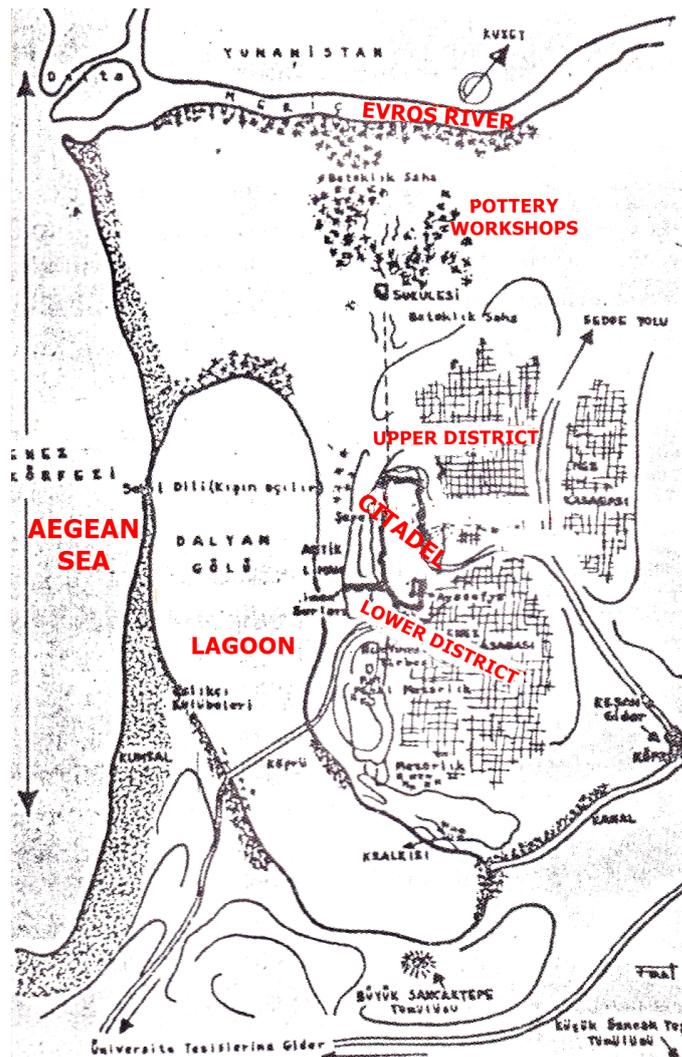


Fig. 13. The districts of post-Byzantine Ainos (edited after Erzen 1973, 34).

in front of the workshop, surrounded by *pithoi* and other clay vessels and equipment. A variety of tools and utensils used in the clay preparation process, which includes pounding, sieving, kneading by hand or foot, and molding the clay, are also depicted. Thirty-one people varying in age are pictured, including four children and possibly a woman holding a baby. With some reservations, we may claim that the majority of the artisans are between the ages of 25 and 40, with adolescents and children among them. The workshop is equipped with wooden benches, basins, and a pedal operated wheel, and it consists of two stone-built structures with at least one window and a big double entrance, as well as an open area in the front.

The storage jars, however, are the most important feature of this picture, which –as previously said– is the only evidence of an Ainian *pithos* workshop. Due to their presence, these *pithoi* are identified –beyond any doubt– as local products. There are large and small biconical *pithoi* without a neck, as well as pear-shaped one, whose attribution to the *pithos* production of Ainos had been questioned thus far. Among the other utensils there are two-handed water jugs and clay bowls, which were probably also made in the workshop.

According to oral testimonies of the descendants of Ainian artisans or merchants, who now live in Alexandroupolis, the workshops were called “*tsoukaladika*” or “*tsoukalaria*” and produced a wide variety of ceramic products. A satirical poem recorded in a newspaper of Istanbul in 1909, mentions *pithos* workshops (*pitharia*) in Ainos that produce storage jars, as well as other pottery workshops (*tsoukalaria*). It is unclear, however, if “pure” *pithos* workshops existed as well (Papathanasi-Mousiopolou 1980, 116–17).



Fig. 14. Photograph of a pottery workshop in Ainos (Archive of the “Hellenic Museum of Ainos” Association in Alexandroupolis). Translation of the Greek inscription: “From the aforetime Ainian craft industry of the potters of Ainos. Only three survive from this part of the entirety of the guild; the others belong to eternity and memory...”.

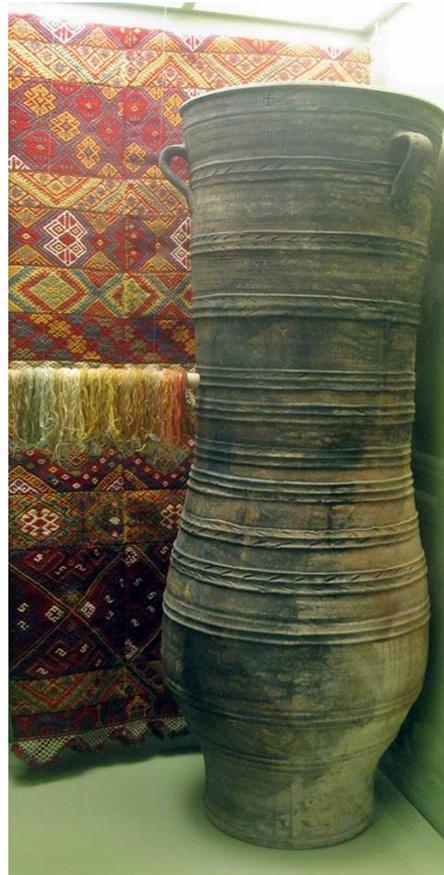
In addition to the usual vessels, they also made well rims, dishes (*tsirpania*), hollow vessels without hands (*goudroules*), night containers (*sympetheroi*), goblet drums with swan leather on top (*dümbeleks*), incense burners, oil lamps, money boxes (*koumbarades*), kitchen pots (*tsoukalia*), jugs (*layinia* and *lainoudia*), and oblong cylindrical vessels for the dyeing of yarns and fabrics, which remind us of the Cretan dyeing jars (*boyatzopithara*) (Figs. 15–16).

The potters of Ainos also produced building materials, such as tiles, bricks, water pipes (*kiounghia*), as well as raw bricks made of mud and straw. They were used in the construction of houses with the technique of *bağdadi*, where the skeleton is wooden and the filling of the walls is made with plinths. As *bağdadi* was the most popular building technique at that time, the Aenian mudbricks were produced and sold by thousands, having the unique mark of each craftsman (Skiadas 2017).

5. THE PITHOI OF AINOS

The Byzantines referred to the primary clay storage container with the ancient Greek word *pithos*, or more widely *pitharion* (pl. *pitharia*) or *pithopoulon*, both diminutive names. The difference between *pithos* and *pitharion* lies in their size. We can, therefore, assume that *pithoi* were the large jars stored in cellars and very difficult to move after their emplacement, while *pitharia*, smaller at size, were storage vessels, whose transport and transfer was easier (Bakirtzis 1989, 110).

Ainian *pithoi* were made in four sizes (Papathanasi-Mousiopoulou 1980, 114; Korre-Zografou 1995, 153) and were renowned for their exceptional durability, which was attributed to the appropriate materials, the right



Figs. 15–16. Large cylindrical *pithoi* for the dyeing of yarns (19th century), from Ainos (located on the coastal square of Arkioi, Dodecanese) and Crete.

molding of clay and their shape (Figs. 17–18). The larger ones were called “*yeni dūnya*” and had a capacity of around 800 okes, that is to say a little more than 1 ton. The next sizes were called “*mesopitharo*” (i.e., middle-jar), with a capacity of 400 okes (about 500 kg), “*batalella*” of 200 okes (about 250 kg) and “*evdomintara*” of 70 okes (about 90 kg) (in Greek, *evdominta* means seventy).

5.1. Preparation of clay

The installation of the ceramic workshops required convenient access to raw materials, such as clay soil, water, and wood (fuel). According to oral testimonies, the clay of the Ainian ceramics was extracted from the alluvial deposits of the Evros River with ladders and leather baskets or sacks, at a depth of 40 to 50 m. Nonetheless, extensive clay deposits, which are likely to have provided appropriate soil for pottery in the past, were discovered during a surface survey in the area of Ainos, near the Ainos-İpsala highway, northeast of the contemporary village. According to Papathanasi-Mousiopoulou (1980), the rich supplies of the “mount” Klapsi in the area of St. Anna provided soil for the potters of Ainos. After the extraction of the clay, its preparation took place at the workshop and included pounding and sieving it, transporting and soaking it in basins, and wedging it by both foot and hand.

5.2. Technology

Ainian *pithoi* were built in sections with the coil technique, that is, with cylindrical pieces of clay, which were called by different names depending on the region (they were called “*klikia*” in Thrace, “*stomoses*” in Crete, and “*kolliseis*” in Messenia region). The coils were originally molded by hand, and after being placed, they were lifted and pulled upwards so as to form a waistband.

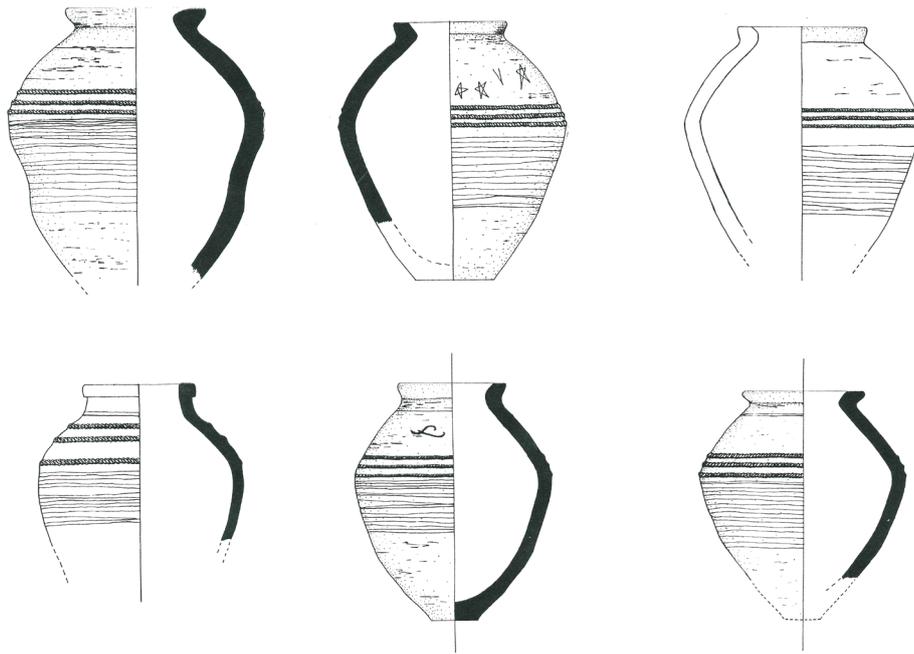


Fig.17. Large sizes of Ainian *pithoi*, Thasos.

The typical shape of an Ainian *pithos* consists of four distinct parts, each of which represents a different stage of construction (Fig. 19). The term “*glastri*” (i.e., pot) refers to the lowest part of the jar –the base– that supported the main body. The second part, called “*mpoli*”, is attached to the base forming the main body of the *pithos*, i.e., the belly. It is molded at a sufficient height, until the vessel reaches its maximum diameter. During this stage of the process, the outer surface of the body of all the Ainian *pithoi* bears perimetrically linear traces of rope, which was tied around to reinforce and support the vessel during the drying of the damp clay. The third part of the jar was placed next, named “*kioupi*” (turk. küp = jar). It featured the shoulder of the *pithos* and often included a variety of decorative patterns. If the jar had a neck, it was then added and in the end the rim was formed –known as “*ksecheiloma*” (Papathanasi-Mousiopolou 1980, 114; Korre-Zografou 1995, 152–53)– which received a clay or stone lid on top for the sealing of the vessel.

Of course, the number of the names does not reflect the actual number of sections required for the manufacture of each *pithos*, which was dependent on its size. There is no precise description of the full procedure, but we notice four to six parts in general, with the shoulder, the neck and the rim being made by separate coils. However, when the shoulder was particularly high, as is the case with the large sizes of the Ainian *pithoi*, it required more than one coil for its manufacture. We know from *pithos* workshops, such as those of Crete, that a set of hand-operated wheels below the ground surface was utilized for producing the larger jars, as standard pedal operated potter’s wheels could not be used for this purpose (Fig. 20). This allowed the workshop to offset the time lost due to partial manufacture by producing a large number of *pithoi* simultaneously.

The manufacture of vessels with the technique of the pedal operated wheel is characteristic of Greek traditional ceramics (Voyatzoglou-Sakelaropoulou 2009, 30–1). Ainian *pithoi* are also wheel-made, as indicated by the wheel traces on their interior walls. Although we are informed that two apprentices spun the wheel while running to manufacture the “first” size (Korre-Zografou 1995, 152), the largest sizes were probably handmade, such as *pithoi* in the region of Messenia (Psaropoulou 1987–1988, 93–5) and Cyprus (Korre-Zografou 1995, 322). In general, jars of very large dimensions made of clay with non-plastic inclusions are difficult to produce on a pedal operated wheel (Blandino 1984, 17–8; Giannopoulou 2002, 151).

Similar manufacture to that of the large Ainian *pithoi* can be noticed in the super-sized *pithoi* from Georgia, which are formed initially on a small table or floor wheel, while the rest of the body is handmade. The famous

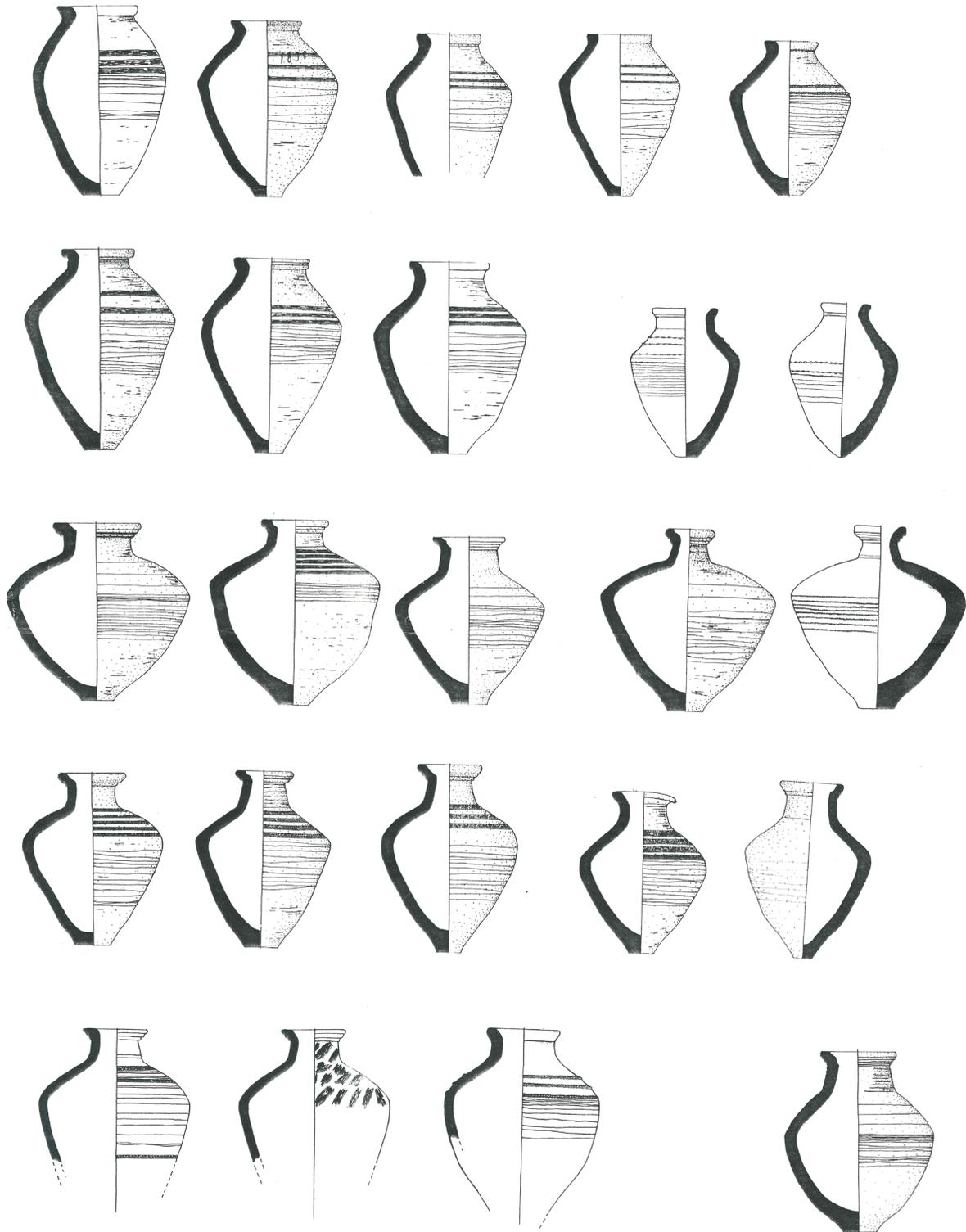


Fig. 18. Medium and smaller sizes of Ainian *pithoi*, Thasos.

Georgian wines are still fermented today in these jars, known as *kvevri* or *qvevri*, in accordance with ancient wine making practices.

The manufacture technique of large *pithoi* was time-consuming, since it required sufficient time of intermediate drying before the following part could be added. The clay should neither dry out nor be too moist, in order to bear the weight and the pressure coming from the jar maker. Otherwise, deformation of the vessel

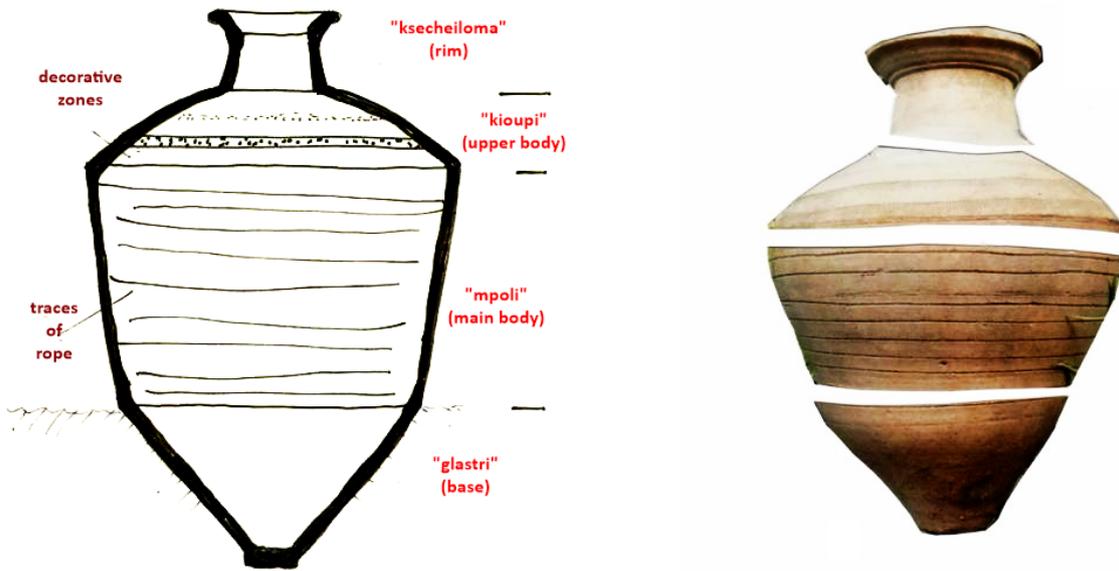


Fig. 19. The parts of an Ainian *pithos* (edited after Skiadas 2017).



Fig. 20. Hand-operated wheels below the ground for the manufacture of Cretan *pithoi* (Centre of the Study of Modern Ceramics, Athens, Greece).

could be caused (Fig. 21). It is noteworthy that throughout the Byzantine period, *pithoi* were ordered at the pottery workshops, and the buyer was obliged to watch closely the entire long process of their manufacture. This meant that if the jar presented a defect or fell out of use at any point of the procedure, the buyer was held responsible rather than the potter. This way, the interests of the workshop were secured against the client, since it had to spend abundant raw materials and to employ its entire staff for the manufacture of such a large vessel.



Fig. 21. Deformation of an Ainian *pithos*.

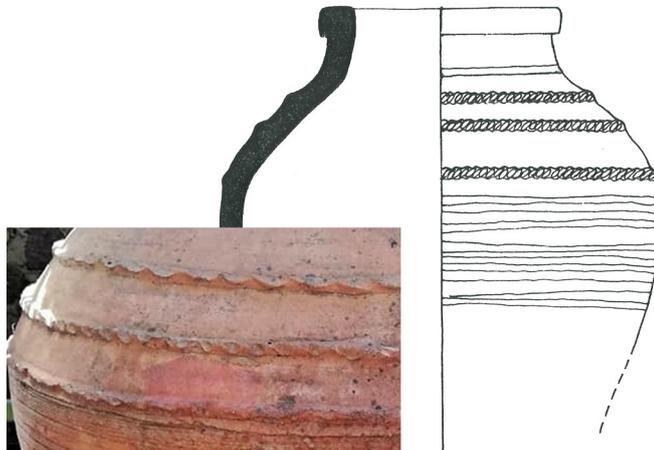


Fig. 22. Relief clay cords (*fitilia*) on the shoulder of Ainian *pithoi*.

Because of the difficulty of manufacturing the large sizes, a slight hollowing is formed on several *pithoi* between the lower part and the belly due to the pressure of the support rope. This occurs as a result of the clay not being completely dried before the subsequent section was added. At the joint of the bands, which is a demanding stage of the process, clay cords in the shape of relief ropes (*fitilia*) are frequently added externally to support the junction, serving as decorative elements as well (Fig. 22).

The next stages, after the final drying, were the first firing in the kiln and, immediately after that, the glazing process. Since antiquity, the stage of firing ceramics in the kiln, and in particular the firing of *pithoi*, was the most challenging and significant moment of the entire manufacturing process, which involved a lot of risk and potential loss.

Firing determines the final appearance of the vessels, affecting their color, their physical characteristics, the hardness, the porosity and their permeability. In the coil technique, for example, parts of the vessel that were not fully joined may have trapped air, which expands with the fire, possibly leading to cracks or even breakage of the jar. Mistakes in the firing process not only had a negative impact on the vessels, but also on the ceramic kiln itself (Giannopoulou 2002, 175–76 with bibliography, 290–91). The ceramic kilns in the Greek region, already since antiquity, belong to the wider category of updraft firing kilns, with a circular or rectangular plan (Giannopoulou 2002, 255–56, 281). We are informed that Ainian *pithoi* were placed in the kiln in reverse and were baked in pairs, but we do not know which type of kiln was used (Skiadas 2017).

Glazing, as a rule, took place after the first firing of the vessels, using lead as a primary ingredient, a common technique in other traditional glazes as well. Glazing based on lead is reported as early as 2000 B.C. in the Near East. However, lead glazes dominated during the Byzantine and Ottoman periods (Giannopoulou 2002, 282). The primary cause for the mixing of materials was the great economic value of lead. In some places, such as in Messenia, for reasons of economy, the storage jars were glazed directly after drying and were fired only once. Yet, with this method the glaze often runs the risk of flaking and cracking in the kiln due to the moisture released (Giannopoulou 2002, 283, 285, 291).

During the glazing process, the inner surface of Ainian *pithoi* was first spread with oil, followed by an even blend of powdered lead and fine sand from Evros (Korre-Zografou 1995, 153). This mixture was converted into an olive-green glaze once the jar was fired a second time, which was essential for the insulation of the inside, since *pithoi* were primarily used for oily products (Fig. 23).



Fig. 23. Inner glaze of Ainian *pithoi* from Thasos.

5.3. Distribution

The reputation of Ainian *pithoi* grew as a result of the large and experienced fleet of the town, as well as of its expanded commercial activities. The jars were transported by sea to almost every island of the Aegean, as well as the coastlines of Macedonia, Thrace, Thessaly and Asia Minor. The best recipients were Lesbos, Thasos, Samos, the Sporades, Volos, Euboea and Attica (Fig. 1). We even meet them in Chios after the first quarter of the 19th century, when the local handmade *pithos* production gradually declines. The Ainian *pithoi* were transported directly from Ainos; however there is some indication that a number arrived via significant transit markets like Izmir (personal communication with K. Chionis, regarding the jars in his house at Potos, Thasos). They are found in large quantities in olive oil museums in Lesbos and in northwest Turkey, as well as in other thematic museums, such as the Silk Museum in Soufli, Thrace.

The spreading of Ainian *pithoi*, however, was not only by sea, as exports were also served by land transportation and by the Evros river ships. As a result, the jars spread throughout the Greek mainland, depending on local requirements and the extent of olive cultivation in each region. Soufli, Didymoteicho –where there were many ceramic workshops– and Hadrianopolis used almost exclusively Ainian *pithoi* (Skiadas 2017).

Such imports are exclusive to Mount Athos. The few examples we encounter farther out from the Aegean Sea, such as in Ioannina and Konitsa (Epirus), Corfu and Leukas (Ionian Sea), are perhaps the outcome of secondary spread via resale points or part of a bride's dowry after she traveled a long distance for her wedding. In coastal regions, the supply was conducted directly by sea, while mountain areas of the islands and parts of the hinterland required transportation using ox carts or beasts of burden. The eastern boundary of coastal distribution seems to be the region of Antalya across from Cyprus; however Ainian *pithoi* are also found in the interior of Central Turkey in the area of Iconium (Turkish: Konya), at a great distance from the sea (Fig. 1).

Further north, they are discovered in Central and South Bulgaria (Pazardzhik Regional Historical Museum and Haskovo Regional History Museum), as well as in areas of the Western Pontus, such as the area of South-Western Paphlagonia (Laflı and Kan Şahin 2015, 99 and fig. 11). The Olive Tree Museum in Imperia, in North-West Italy, marks their western boundary. Here, too, their secondary provenance is evident. Nevertheless, they are not found –according to our surface survey so far– in the hinterland of Western Macedonia, despite its proximity to major markets, such as Thessaloniki, nor in the Western Balkans, where jars from the Peloponnese were used to supply the needs of the olive-producing regions, arriving probably by the Ionian and the Adriatic Sea (Giannopoulou 2002, 296).

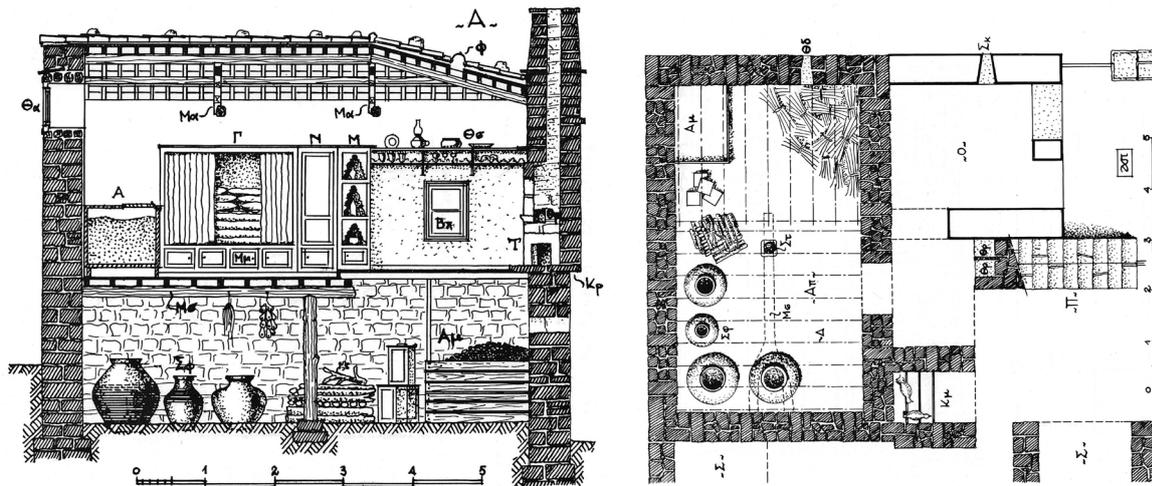


Fig. 24. Placement of Ainian *pithoi* in traditional houses of Imbros (Passadaios 1973, pl. 2, 3).

5.4. Use

In most cases, *pithoi* are placed underground –in the cellars of traditional houses– fastened with low walls or in cavities excavated into the earth, as seen, for example, in Thasos and Imbros islands across from Ainos (Fig. 24). This way, the stability and safe preservation of their contents was ensured, a storage practice that has been used throughout antiquity, up to the present day. Sometimes, the doors of the storerooms were put in place afterwards due to the considerable size of the jars (Giannopoulou 2002, 96). In Cyprus, specifically, *pithoi* were placed before the walls of the house were built (Korre-Zografou 1995, 322). *Pithoi* appear in the girls' dowry and in a significant number of inheritance certificates, but this does not imply that they were particularly important for their holders, since such documents include generally the entire houseware in detail.

Ainian *pithoi* were ideal for storing oil, although they were used for swine or cereal storage as well, in areas without significant olive cultivation. Besides, there is an ancient and unbreakable connection between these goods and the *pithos* vessel. Smaller sizes were meant to be used primarily for the storage of high-fat products, such as salty meat and fish, pickles, cheese, olives, butter and yogurt, as well as dried fruit and nuts. In Ainos, also black caviar was kept in *pithoi* filled with oil (Kladara 2008, 15).

6. TYPOLOGY OF AINIAN *PITHOI*

Typologically, the *pithoi* of Ainos can be divided into two types, each of them having several categories and variations, depending on their particular manufacture or decorative details: A) into *pithoi* with a neck, which are the smallest as a rule, and B) into *pithoi* without a neck, which are larger at size (Figs. 17–18).

Pithoi with a neck (Type A) have a thick, incurved rim with an angular or circular cross section, which is either single or more elaborate, consisting of two or three rings. Sometimes it is recessed inside, so that the lid fits better, despite the fact that we have not found clay lids so far. Wooden and stone covers, which are often of a larger diameter than the rim, must have played that role. The neck is cylindrical, conical or with a slightly hollow profile. Its width and height also vary, with the latter ranging from hardly noticeable to very high.

The profile of this type is usually keel-shaped, with the angulation –as a rule– higher than the middle of the vessel, being sometimes slightly curvilinear, sometimes angular and sometimes over expanded between the shoulder and the belly of the *pithos*. In very little numbers we encounter spherical, oval or pear-shaped profiles.

Pithoi without a neck (Type B), always of large dimensions, have a horizontal –very rarely circular– rim, and a keel-shaped, almost biconical body with a more or less intense angulation. In some cases, the smaller sizes of

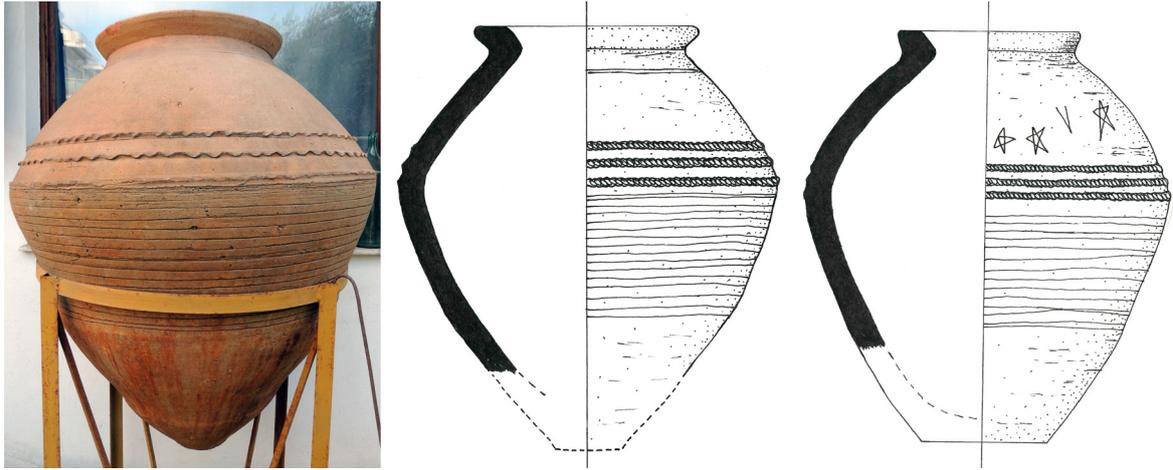


Fig. 25. Ainian *pithoi* from Thasos: Categories A1 and B1.

this type have an oval profile, and rarely an elongated body. They usually have one or more relief rope-shaped cords of clay (*fitilia*) on the lower part of the shoulder at the joint with the belly of the vessel.

Although the rule for the *pithoi* with a capacity of 800 and 400 okes is the existence of two or three *fitilia* or – very rarely – of simple relief bands on the shoulder, in few cases we encounter cords in other parts as well, either at the joint of the belly with the base (*glastri*) or on the neck. The technique of adding cords is also very frequent during the Byzantine period, in the 8th and 9th centuries A.D., in regions around the Black Sea (Bakirtzis 1989, 112). On the contrary, it is absent from the late byzantine and post-byzantine *pithos* production of Northern Greece, although it is found in the modern ceramic tradition of Crete and the Greek mainland, for instance at *pithoi* coming from Koroni and Thrapsano.

A smooth groove right under the rim is often observed in both types, probably for the installation of a rope necessary for transferring and fastening the *pithos*. The cascading –usually asymmetric– imprinted lines observed in the belly are due to the rope, which was essential to support the *pithos* while it was still fresh, and had to dry out to bear the weight of the shoulder. This practice is also found in Cyprus, both in *pithoi* and in small vessels (Korre-Zografou 1995, 279).

Of the individual categories of the two types, the following are the most characteristic:

a. A1 and B1 (Fig. 25): They include large-sized biconical *pithoi* with a very low neck or no neck, respectively. These are the most representative jars of Ainos. In the Greek regions, these categories are known to us mainly by the second size, with a capacity of 400 okes. These *pithoi* are 1.40–1.50 m high, with a maximum diameter of about 1.10 m and a rim diameter of 0.70–0.80 m. The largest size is found mainly in areas of North-West Turkey. The construction of these *pithoi* is completed in six or seven sections. These two categories are mainly found in warehouses of olive mills or monasteries, but also in house cellars, placed inside the ground.

b. A4 and A5 (Fig. 26): Biconical vessels of medium or small size with a high and distinct neck. They belong to the third and fourth size of the Ainian *pithoi*, with a capacity of 200 or 70 okes. On average, they are 0.70–1.00 m high and have a maximum diameter of 0.60–0.80 m.

6.1. Decoration

The decoration of Ainian *pithoi* is mainly impressed or incised, and is formed while the surface of the vessel is still fresh. Incised motifs are rarely made after the firing of the *pithos*. A few examples are found in the island of Imbros. It is unclear whether there is a relation between the decoration and the workshop or the potter, but it is probable that each workshop had its own decorative themes. Among the incised motifs, which are particularly encountered on the shoulder of the oversized *pithoi*, the most popular are: the star, the boat, the fish, the tree



Fig. 26. Ainian *pithoi* from Thasos: Categories A4 and A5.

and, very rarely, the human form or face (Fig. 27). This decoration reminds us of similar incised motifs on *pithoi* and *pithos* lids of Chios, many of which have apotropaic symbolism (Liaros 2016, 62–5).

The impressed decoration is formed by a stamp or a cylinder seal, in one to three decorative zones on the shoulder of the vessel. This technique, which is also found on *pithoi* from Thrapsano, is almost the rule for the Ainian *pithoi* of smaller dimensions with a neck. The impressed motifs include: “chessboard”, groups of rhombi with a tree or a star inside them, stylized trees, zig zags, flowers and stars (Fig. 28).

The painted decoration with white, beige or reddish dye is rare, including wavy, crooked or straight lines, and asymmetrical spots made with a paintbrush throughout the width of the shoulder of small *pithoi*, sometimes over the stamped decoration (Fig. 29). Representations with red paint are also rare, such as the depiction of a spider and a sail together with an incised sailing-boat on a small *pithos* from Theologos, Thasos (Fig. 30). Abstract decorative themes in whitish color against the light brown color of the surface of the vessel are distinguished in a small number of *pithoi*. Sometimes, the entire outer surface is covered with a light, red or dark coating. Other times, it may have been covered from the beginning with lime, which is always preserved after its removal within the imprints of the ropes.

6.2. Typological Rules

Despite the individual variations in the shape, size and decoration, Ainian *pithos* makers obey to a set of typological rules that make the *pithoi* of their town easily recognizable. These rules seem to apply to all the workshops of Ainos.

I. The *pithoi* have keel-shaped, almost biconical body.

II. They are decorated with relief rope-shaped cords of clay on the shoulder and stamped or incised motifs, a practice we rarely see in other *pithos* workshops in the Aegean.

The most popular categories are two: the large biconical *pithoi* without a neck appropriate for the storage of large amounts of olive oil, and the little keel-shaped *pithoi* with a neck and stamped decoration, appropriate for a variety of products. However, a small number of *pithoi*, which are far from the common norms and show peculiarities, has been recorded.

6.3. Inscriptions

The most important information so far about the *pithos* makers of Ainos –except for a few, unfortunately, oral testimonies of their descendants– come from the incised inscriptions on the shoulder of the larger *pithoi*, which provide us chronologies, names of potters, and above all the place name “Ainos”.

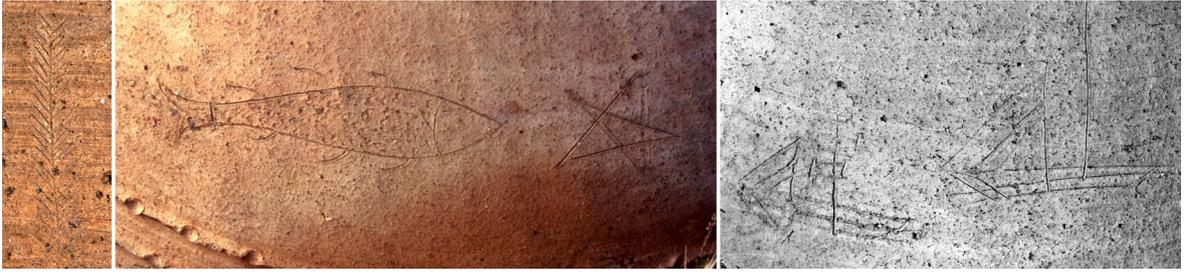


Fig. 27. Incised motifs on the shoulder of Ainian *pithoi*, Thasos (tree, fish, star, sailing-boats).

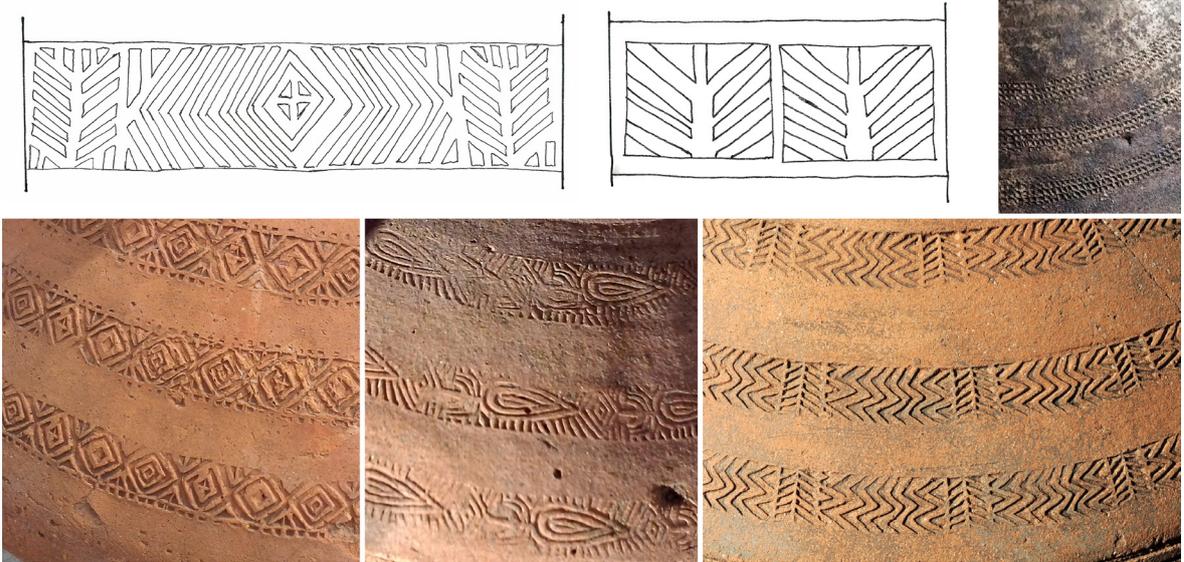


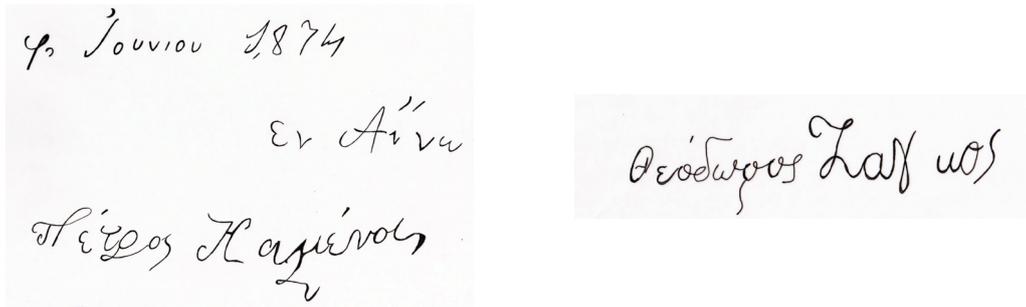
Fig. 28. Impressed decoration on the shoulder of Ainian *pithoi*, Thasos.



Fig. 29. Painted decoration over stamped motifs.



Fig. 30. Painted and incised themes: spider, sail, ship (Thasos).

Figs. 31–32. Greek inscriptions on Ainian *pithoi*, Thasos.

On a *pithos* from Limenaria, Thasos, we read in two lines in Greek “7 June 1874 in Ainos / Petros Kamenos” (Fig. 31), while on a *pithos* from the same collection we read the name “Theodoros Zagkos” (Fig. 32). An illegible name of a *pithos* maker along with the date “1874 in Ainos” is found as well on a *pithos* from Izmir. In two other *pithoi* from Thasos (Limenas, Thasos: pottery shop of Kostas Chrysoghelos and house of Theologhitis family), we find the dates 1898 and 1890, while on a *pithos* of the Agapitos’ oil press, we read the inscription “Year 1913 April 22 / Christodoulos E. Karnavalous” (Fig. 33).

A *pithos* of smaller dimensions from the Papastylianos’ oil press, also in Thasos, is signed as “Ioannis Kokkidis 1925” (Fig. 34). Such a late inscription for Ainos is contradictory, since according to all the oral testimonies the production stops with the exchange of the Greek and Turkish populations in 1923. The date 1925 is justified by the fact that a number of Greeks remained in parts of Eastern Thrace, even after the Treaty of Lausanne, and continued to work. This particular potter was obviously one of these cases.

Figs. 33–34. Greek inscriptions on Ainian *pithoi*, Thasos.

In Kyme (Euboea), there were *pithoi* signed as “Anagnostou”, and in Lesbos as “Nikolaos X. Antonios Karas”, if we read the name correctly. On other *pithoi* we simply notice “initials” with capital calligraphic letters, usually incised and rarely stamped [in Thasos ΓΚ or ΓΧ, ΚΣ or ΚΕ (Fig. 35), ΔΠ, ΕΒΨ and ΙΑ; in Imbros ΠΓΧ (?); in Lesbos ΕΨ and ΓΒΨ; in Volos ΙΑ and ΑΠΕ (Fig. 35); in Tripolis ΡΦΞ; in Aegina the monogram Π] (Fig. 36).

On Mount Athos, the inscription “1848 of Monk Kallinikos” (personal communication with K. Filis) (Fig. 37) appears to have been added at the buyer’s demand. Inscriptions on *pithoi* usually refer to names of potters or workshop owners. Although uncommon, instances in which the buyer is mentioned do occur. This specific *pithos* was ordered and purchased by monk Kallinikos for his personal olive oil, and the inscription indicates that he wished to guard it against potential theft. The presence of the name of an individual monk rather than of the monastery is because the majority of the monasteries of Mount Athos during the Ottoman period, particularly the 19th century, were organized under the idiorrhhythmic system. Unlike the traditional cenobitic standard of the monastic life, this new form of internal organization allowed the monks a more private life under their own rules, as well as the ability to retain personal property.



Figs. 35–36. Incised and stamped initials, Thasos and Volos.



Fig. 37. The *pithos* of Monk Kallinikos on Mount Athos and detail of the inscription.

The only example of a more extensive text has so far been an inscription incised on the shoulder of a large *pithos* in Mykonos (Cyclades), which is translated by Greek “*May God help those who are in the sea*”. In the same vessel we read the name “*Soterios*” with capital letters, which means Savior (Fig. 38). The inscription has both invocative and apotropaic character, aiming to the divine protection of the travelers at sea. The *pithos* also depicts a ship with a flag and mast, and an armed man with a white knee-length pleated skirt (*foustanella*), fez, gun and sword, *tsarouchia* shoes and a flag. The other side shows a large sailing ship with open sails.

On a small number of *pithoi* there are probably calligraphic emblems and monograms of the Ottomans (*tuğra*), made in whitish color against the light brown of the vessel, although in most of the cases they are probably abstract decorative themes rather than signatures or words.

A document dated on 5th March 1885 relating to the purchase and sale of a pottery workshop lists the names of “*Panagiotis Moschos*” and “*K. Dem. Kamenos*” (Papathanasi-Mousiopoulou 1980, 115). Oral testimonies



Fig. 38. The large inscribed Ainian *pithos* from Mykonos.

identify the names of other Ainian *pithos* makers during the first quarter of the 20th century, which correspond to eight ceramic workshops. These are: Mpoulmpoutzis, owner of a large workshop in Ainos employing 40 people; the Karpouzelis Brothers, who ran three workshops; G. Mandas (or Manias), Xikis (Ksikis), A. Kopanos and Kamenos (personal communication with S. Kladara, Hellenic Museum of Ainos Association). The Tabakopoulos family is also connected with pottery. The family moved from Ainos to Izmir as early as 1867, and it ended up in Chania (Crete) in 1922. Their descendants, Giorgos and Stelios Tabakopoulos, became two of the most significant potters of the town (Skiadas 2017).

Even though the inscriptions on *pithoi* have a long history throughout antiquity, they are considered a rare find, and perhaps they should be connected with special moments of the production. We exclusively find them in *pithoi* of large dimensions, and they seem to be indicative of the potter's satisfaction and pride for his achievement. The writing of the name or the initial letters seems to refer to the *pithos* maker who, at the same time, might be the owner of the workshop as well.

It is characteristic that in recent years in Cyprus the transfer of the *pithos* from the workshop to its place of use was under the responsibility of the buyer and not of the manufacturer, because there was a possibility that the vessel would crack. It has, therefore, been argued that the monograms and the names that were incised before the firing on the rim or on the upper part of the *pithos* –so as to be visible when the vessels were buried in the ground– are those of the owners and not of the potters (Yakobson 1966, 201–2; Bakirtzis 1989, 118).

7. STABILIZATION AND DATING OF AINIAN *PITHOS* PRODUCTION

We are currently not sure of the start time nor of the “origin” of the *pithos* production of Ainos. The first direct evidence of the circulation of Ainian jars is a document of 1817 from Kastellorizo, Dodecanese, in which “a *pithos of Ainos*” is mentioned (Korre-Zografou 1995, 26). In places that did not have olive cultivation (e.g. Abdera, Thrace), the arrived *pithoi* were drilled in the form of a spigot and were used for wine. The wealthy houses, like the Pamouktsoglou mansion, had enough of those *pithoi* for the oil as well, which was provided from elsewhere.

Our knowledge of the late Byzantine and post-Byzantine *pithos* production of the Northern Aegean is extremely incomplete. *Pithoi* of impressive size with an oval, spherical, and very rarely biconical profile, coming from regions of Eastern Macedonia, Thrace and Northwest Turkey, do not show any typological similarities with the Ainian *pithos* production. However, already since the Byzantine period, there is evidence of a potters' guild, which, perhaps, also reinforces the Byzantine origin of the potters' guild of Ainos.

In the 17th century, the Ottoman chronicler and traveler Evliya Çelebi points out the enormous flourishing of pottery throughout Thrace, recording the existence of two hundred workshops in the town of Didymoteicho



Fig. 39. Ainian *pithoi* in the storeroom of Imaret complex, Kavala.

alone (Spatharis 1933, 123; Bakirtzis 1980, 153). However, during his visit to Ainos, he refers to the public buildings of the town, to shops and residences (Karateke 2013, 136–37), but does not provide any information about pottery workshops. We can, therefore, assume that the beginning of the production of the Ainian *pithoi* –at least in sufficient numbers and with commercial importance– dates after the middle of the 17th century, especially if we consider that Çelebi praises the ceramic production of other regions of Thrace and Eastern Macedonia, such as Zichni or Zichna (Serres) and Didymoteicho (Spatharis 1933, 123; Moschopoulos 1939, 157; Zekos 2003, 456).

Most of the earliest dates that have been found so far on Ainian *pithoi* belong in the early 19th century (1818 in Thasos and 1823 in Çatalca, Istanbul province), while the latest in the Interwar period (1925), when the production of Ainos had almost disappeared. Individual examples, however, confirm the presence of large *pithoi* of type A1 and B1 in the first half of the 18th century, such as one in Tsagarada (Pelion) dated to 1734 (Papadopoulos 2019, 278).

Apart from the inscriptions that give absolute dating, the construction and operation of the storerooms of the buildings where the *pithoi* are found give us a relative dating of the vessels. The *pithoi* often date from the beginning of the construction of the buildings, since their cellars were also made at the same time. The Ainian *pithoi* embedded in the floor of the storeroom of Imaret of Kavala, for example, could be dated between 1817 and 1821, in case they were placed during the first phase of the operation of the building (Fig. 39). Otherwise, they could be dated to the second quarter of the 19th century –and certainly before 1842– when, according to H.W. Lowry and İ.E. Erünsal (2011, 145), the kitchens started to operate.

Similar Ainian *pithoi* in the mansion of Georgios Mavros (or Schwartz) in Ampelakia, Larissa, must be dated to the last decades of the 18th century, since the construction of the complex began in 1778 and was completed in 1787. In a 17th century Muslim mosque in Izmir we have recorded an Ainian *pithos*, but it is uncertain whether its purchase coincides with the construction of the monument.

A strong indication that the *pithos* production of Ainos had started at least since the 18th century, is the surname *Tsoukalas* (i.e., potter), found in the list of those who sacrificed themselves for the Greek War of Independence (1821–1830) (Mystakidis 1929, 53). It is witnessed since the second decade of the 19th century in the town, and we can assume that the acquisition of the name must have involved one or two generations of potters. The inscription in the chapel of Hodegetria in the parish of the Three Hierarchs of Ainos is convincing evidence towards this conclusion. According to the inscription, Ainian “kettle-makers and potters” dedicated



Fig. 40. Ainian *pithoi* in the storeroom of the Holy Monastery of St. Ignatios, Lesbos.

an icon of Saint Cyprian to the chapel in 1778 (Lampakis 1908, 21; Samidis 1929, 282; Samothrakis 1944, 30; Papathanasi-Mousiopolou 1980, 116).

In the cases of the olive presses of the holy monasteries, the *pithoi* could be traced back to even earlier times, as for example those of the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi in Mount Athos, the storeroom of which dates since the 16th–17th century and contained eleven *pithoi* enclosed with built dividing walls (Papadopoulos 2019, 269 with bibliography). All of the *pithoi* come from Ainos, but unfortunately we do not know the time they were placed in the room, so we can assume an earlier start of the *pithos* production of Ainos by about two centuries, something that could be also reinforced by the prosperity of the town at the same time. The storage of oil is similar in the Holy Monastery of Great Lavra, which was in use at least since the middle of the 18th century, if not since the time of the reconstruction of the building in 1580.

The founding of the Monastery of Saint Ignatios in Lesbos (also known as Limonas Monastery or Monastery of Archangel Michael), which is the largest monastery in the Aegean Sea and has dozens of Byzantine and Ainian *pithoi*, is also dated to the 16th century (Fig. 40). *Pithoi* from Ainos, built or freestanding, are also found in the storerooms of the olive press of the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai in Egypt, which was also in use since the 16th century. The presence of these vessels here constitutes the southernmost point of primary use of Ainian *pithoi* (Papadopoulos 2019, 269–70).

It is worth mentioning that, despite the gradual decline of Ainos after the middle of the 19th century, the *pithos* production of the town does not seem to be significantly influenced, since after the half of the century and up to 1923 there is plenty of evidence for the circulation of its impressive *pithoi*. Some dates, in fact, later of the exchange of the populations, prove that a number of *pithos* makers remained in Ainos, and their workshops kept running for at least two more decades.

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