

Cycladic “Frying Pans” Reexamined: An Experimental Approach

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Cycladic “frying pans” remain one of the most enigmatic and exhibited artifacts of the Aegean Bronze Age, and while many theories have been suggested regarding their possible function(s) and the symbolism of their decorative features, little attention has been paid to their manufacture, even in the key publications of Coleman (1985) and Rambach (2000). A close analysis of their *chaîne opératoire* and morphological characteristics (e.g., weight, measurements, syntax of decoration, and rendering of idiosyncratic motifs) can reveal aspects of manufacture and artist’s intent and may also invite reconsideration of some proposed functions.

Therefore, to gain a better understanding of the Cycladic frying pans, we have chosen to re-create one, specifically inventory number NAM 4974 (Tomb 174, Chalandriani, Syros), its with forked handle, central ship motif, and network pattern of spirals. Our final replica has taken into consideration the scholarship concerning Bronze Age ceramic technology, first-hand observations of select Cycladic frying pans at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, including inventory number NAM 4974 itself, microimaging, and three-dimensional laser scanning.

In the course of examining multiple frying pans, precise weights, never before considered, and measurements were recorded, and careful attention was paid to their morphological and decorative characteristics, their fabric, and the white-paste filling of their impressed designs. With these observations, we were able to better inform the production of our 1:1 scale replica, which in turn has revealed new thoughts concerning the time and tool kit required by Early Bronze Age Cycladic potters. Furthermore, with our finished replica we were also able to perform complementary experimentation, putting to the test popular theories regarding Cycladic frying pan function.

This study brings new attention to one of the most iconic artifact types of the Aegean Bronze Age. Our poster provides the results of our experimental study, including not only the methodology and procedure of our reproduction but also our observations on manufacture, design, and possible function(s). Alongside the poster is our scale reproduction of inventory number NAM 4974 and the tools used in its manufacture.