ΛΑΣΑΝΑ: A CONTRIBUTION
TO THE ANCIENT GREEK KITCHEN
(Plates 101–105)

Excavations at Greek Settlements have frequently revealed a curious clay artifact whose function still eludes archaeologists despite imaginative explanations. A solution to this puzzle emerges from ancient art and literature; it is presented here to encourage the retrieval and identification of companion pieces.¹

The shape seems so deliberately eccentric, yet remains so consistent among examples from a wide range of geographical and chronological circumstances, that it suggests a specific and universal purpose.² The object is essentially a standing cylinder with broad base (sometimes offset as a disk or torus) and flaring crown, deliberately bent above its midpoint to produce a curving profile. The rim, closed by a concave disk, thus cants at an angle of about 30° to the horizontal base. A single ring or strap handle is attached to its outside face; a long, narrow groove, furrow, or even a fold sometimes runs vertically down the opposite (incurving) side. The fabric of known examples is most commonly coarse, often resembling the cooking or table ware in use, if not produced (e.g. at Histria), at the same site; the temper is heavy (grit or straw) with visible inclusions, sometimes in the form of quartz particles, suggesting that the object was intended to be sturdy and heat resistant. Traces of burning are frequent and (where their location is published) appear on the inside face. Quality varies from semifine, wheelmade versions (Fig. 1) to compact and heavy shapes (Figs. 5, 6); finer examples (e.g. from Kavousi, Crete) can include slip and incised or molded decoration. Dimensions also vary but proportions are nearly constant: the objects range from 10 to 25 cm. in height, their base and rim diameters from 10 to 15 cm. with a midpoint diameter of ca. 5 to 10 cm.

¹ Dr. Charles K. Williams, II generously provided the opportunity to study the objects from Corinth; he and Dr. Nancy Bookidis encouraged and facilitated the preparation of text and illustrations. Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer kindly allowed me to publish two examples in the Berlin Antikenmuseum. I also thank the staff of the Agora Excavations for their generous assistance in studying the examples from Athens. Drawings are by Thomas Feuerhake (Figs. 2–6) and Claire Zimmermann (Fig. 1); photographs are by Craig Mauzy (Pls. 101:c, d, 102, 103:a, b, 105) and Bartzioti and Ioannidou (Pls. 101:a, b, 103:c).

Works frequently cited are abbreviated as follows:

Agora XII = B. Sparkes and L. Talcott, The Athenian Agora, XII, Black and Plain Pottery of the 6th, 5th, and 4th Centuries B.C., Princeton 1970
Corinth VII, iii = G. R. Edwards, Corinth, VII, iii, Corinthian Hellenistic Pottery, Princeton 1975

² A catalogue appends this text and provides sources, dimensions, and publication references for known examples, arranged by area and cited in the text by site. This selection does not claim to be comprehensive and presumes a large number of unpublished or unrecognized additions.
A variety of holes in the pieces introduced before firing has confused their interpretation. Often top and floor are pierced, sometimes so generously that the object is open at both ends or completely hollow, especially in wheelmade examples. Many have lateral openings in the lower body, penetrating one or both sides of the cylinder below the handle. In the past the apertures have led to mistaken explanations which posited the passage of air or liquid through them. A sufficient number of examples, however, lack openings in floor or upper disk, and some are completely solid throughout (Fig. 6), so the upper and lateral holes are best explained as vent holes intended to prevent the thick fabric from cracking in firing.3

These unusual and enigmatic features have aroused attention and curiosity upon discovery, so that examples have been reported from dozens of Greek sites throughout this century (see Catalogue). Domestic and sanctuary contexts have produced them in the Aegean (Corinth, Athens, Miletos, Samos, Thasos, and Crete), at Black Sea colonies (Olbia, Histria, Nymphaeum, Panticapaeum, and Hermonassa), and in Magna Graecia (Himera, Sibaris, Paestum, and Ischia). The westernmost limits of their distribution presently include the Phocaean colonies of Massalia (Marseilles) in France, Ampurias in Spain, and several Greek colonies between them in coastal Languedoc; they occur as far east as Cyprus. A miniature version even exists in the Thera “Massenfund” (see Catalogue: Thera), found among other miniatures of more familiar shapes, implying that the object was common enough for simulacra.4 All those published, except those from Thera, come from settlements or sanctuaries in the company of other coarse wares, particularly cooking vessels. Fine wares in context with them include familiar mainland and Ionian fabrics and shapes, appropriate in region and date to the findspot or its mother city. Thus no particular area can claim the invention of this coarse-ware object; it seems to be a standard and long-lived element of the Greek domestic pottery repertoire. Its contexts stretch in date from early Iron Age to Hellenistic, yet little evolution can be detected between the earliest and latest examples.5

3 Solid examples were noted at Nymphaeum (M. M. Khudiak, Iz Istorii Nymphaeia VI–III c. B.C., Leningrad 1962, p. 39, who called these “votive”, in contrast to the other “rhytons”; A. Kocybala, Greek Colonization on the North Shore of the Black Sea in the Archaic Period, diss. University of Pennsylvania 1978, p. 298); cf. examples in the Berlin Antikennuseum, inv. no. 688x (Figs. 5, 6). Vent holes were noted at Nymphaeum (loc. cit.), Histria (M. Goja and P. Dupont, Histria, V, Ateliers céramiques, București/Paris 1979, pp. 53–56), Miletos (W. Voigtländer, “Funde aus der Insula westlich des Buleuterion in Milet,” IstMitt 32, 1982 [pp. 30–173], p. 171, no. 433, fig. 61), and Paestum (E. Greco and D. Theodorescu, Poseidonia-Paestum, II, L’agora [Collections de l’Ecole Française de Rome Archéologique 42], Rome 1983, p. 116, no. 174, where the central hole in the upper disk is correctly identified as a vent hole).

4 The Thera source is one of the few associated, albeit ambiguously, with a necropolis: the “Massenfund”, several hundred miniature vessels mixed with ash, charcoal, burnt bones, terracottas, astragalai, etc., seems to be a votive deposit made in connection with a burial, although it could be simply debris from a related ritual.

5 Included in the Catalogue are peculiar pyramidal variants from Sybaris, which seem to be a distant relative of the objects under discussion since they provide the same features (broad and stable base tapering to a narrow, incurved crown) and are similar in fabric and context. I have excluded unpublished examples currently under study: those from Thasos recently published by Yves Grandjean (“Tuyères ou supports?” BCH 109, 1985, pp. 265–279); others from post-Geometric levels at Zagora, Andros, will appear in a future volume of the Zagora series by J. R. Green. Recent finds from 4th-century Klaizomenai, under excavation by Güven Bakir, include numerous examples; others have emerged in Iris Love’s excavations at Knidos and are reported from Samos (Agora XII, p. 231, note 17; once on display in the old museum and currently inaccessible while the collection is being installed in the new museum).
The most popular explanation offered for these objects made them “bellows’ nozzles” or clay “tuyères”, originally attached to a leather bellows in order to expell blasts of air towards a fire. The frequent appearance of these objects in contexts associated with metalworking (e.g. at Ischia, Massalia, Ampurias) first suggested a function related to metallurgy. Illustrations of bellows on vases, in particular on a black-figured kantharos from the Akropolis in Athens (Akr. 2134b), further encouraged this view, whereby the flaring base would fit over the bellows outlet and the air would be expelled through the narrow pierced end. The solution has satisfied some scholars to the extent that such “tuyères”, alone, are often cited as sufficient evidence for local activity in metallurgy and their distribution compared to ancient patterns of metal trade and industry.

Other discussions of these objects compared them to certain Rhodian lekythoi with curved necks, probably derived from Near Eastern “arm-shaped” vessels. Because the latter are closed containers and never hollow throughout like many of the examples under discussion, the comparison only applies to a similarity in profile of fragments and has been rejected. Elsewhere and more recently, examples from Athens and Panticapaeum have been interpreted as “torch” (or “taper”) stands, to hold a lighted torch or taper in their upper opening. Inevitably, the objects have been called a form of funnel or identified as cult vessels; in one publication they are even illustrated upside down to serve as rhyta.

6 First suggested by M. Almagro, “Excavaciones de Ampurias: ultimos hallazgos y resultados,” ArchEsp Arq 18, 1945 (pp. 57–75), p. 67, fig. 13.3; followed by R. Benoit (“Soufflets de forges antiques,” REA 50, 1948 [pp. 305–308], pp. 305–307) and in most subsequent publications of similar objects from France and Italy.


9 Agora XII, pp. 231–232, note 16. Under “Addenda”, op. cit., p. 382, the authors cite the examples from Ampurias and their publication but do not discuss the interpretation as “bellows’ nozzles”.

10 I. B. Zeest and I. D. Marchenko, Panticapaeum (Mat. i Issl. po Arkh. SSSR 103), Leningrad 1962, p. 165; Agora XII, p. 232, citing the suggestion of Samuel Ashley. Since Sparkes and Talcott also cite the Black Sea examples on the previous page (p. 231, note 17) and the assistance of Zeest, scholars in Athens and the Soviet Union may have collaborated on the solution.

Before considering choices, several practical objections should be noted which eliminate previously proposed theories. The base of these objects indicates clearly that they sat on a horizontal surface (beyond the potter’s wheel, since even the handmade examples are flat below) and could hardly have been attached to a set of bellows. Furthermore, the rim flares, albeit sometimes around a narrow hole, instead of narrowing as one would expect in a mouthpiece designed to direct a concentrated stream of air. As noted above, the orifices supposed to transmit air or liquid are too irregular in location, not to mention absent entirely in some examples, to constitute primary features essential to function. If anything, they would leak air from a bellows arrangement, reducing the intended effect of a single blast of oxygen. Finally, true bellows’ nozzles from foundry sites exist and differ substantially from these so-called tuyères. Workshops in Athens, Laurion, Corinth, Olympia, and in Greek colonies (Ischia, Pech Maho/Sigean in Roussillon) have produced narrow tapering cones or double-barreled nozzles of heavy fabric (in Roman times, re-used necks of coarse amphoras) with large quartz particles, which have not prevented the vitrification of some in the intense heat of the furnace. Illustrations of bellows suggest an L-shaped horizontal outlet for large stationary bellows, such as the one employed by Hephaistos in the gigantomachy on the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi, which compares to the Olympia examples. Smaller portable kitchen bellows (ῥιπτίς) illustrated on vases consist of an animal skin equipped with two nozzles where the legs of the animal had been or a type resembling the modern hearth bellows, manipulated by two sticks squeezed together to expell air from its pointed end (Pl. 104:a, right end of frieze). Thus there is insufficient evidence to connect the materiali,” in Himera, II, Campagne di Scavo 1966–1973, Rome 1976 (pp. 133–221), p. 220. Rhyta: Khudiak, op. cit. (footnote 3 above), p. 39, pl. 32 (although he notes another 18 fragments, not illustrated, that are completely closed and must be votive: above, footnote 3); N. Bonacasa, “L’area sacra,” in Himera, I, Campagne di Scavo 1963–65, Rome 1970 (pp. 51–235), pp. 234–235, fig. 14, pl. XIV:2, 3: “kernos votivo”. Cf. Grandjean, op. cit. (footnote 5 above), p. 272.


14 R. Gempeler, “Die Schmiede des Hephäst—Eine Satyrszielszene des Harrow-Malers,” AntK 12, 1969, pp. 16–21, pl. 14:3, p. 17, fig. 1, for the “bagpipes” bellows; the modern kind is illustrated on the hydria from
coarse-ware objects under discussion with ancient bellows; many factors, including the existence of closed examples of the shape, eliminate torch stands and votive functions as possibilities.

The first plausible explanation derives from a representation of these objects, in use, on an Archaic vase. An "Ionian" hydria from Caere, now in the Villa Giulia Museum in Rome, illustrates scenes from a sacrifice for Dionysos on the shoulder, above various mythological episodes on the belly (Pl. 104). Different stages in the course of a sacrifice, from slaughter to service, are illustrated in sequence (from left to right) and accompanied by appropriate crockery. Following scenes of slaughter, butchering, and a ritual procession, three figures roast portions of meat, probably the σπλάγχνα, over flames on an altar, while the spits are prepared by another pair. To the right of them, one servant ladles wine from an amphora and two others seem to be washing at a perirrhanterion. The last scene on the right involves, ironically for this study, two figures at a fire, one working a set of bellows or ρηνίς (footnote 14 above). The episode critical for our immediate purpose lies between the wine-server and perirrhanterion (Pl. 104:b). Here, a figure holds a σκαφίς full of meat in his left hand and brandishes pieces of meat on a κρεάγρα in his right, over a deep vat or cauldron set over a fire. The cauldron appears to be propped over the fire on two lateral supports, identical to the objects considered in this article. Cylindrical objects on broad disk bases curve in towards their flaring rims, set at a steep angle to the base, and meet the lower wall of the vessel they support. A handle on the convex side, opposite the fire, completes the resemblance of the shape to those under discussion.

This arrangement was described as a "cauldron on a tripod" in its first publication and thus maintained in the subsequent literature. But only two supports are shown, and despite the presence of a fire beneath the cauldron, which could well hide a third support, one would expect all three to be represented, as in illustrations of tripods on vases. Nor do the two curving supports resemble the legs of any known tripod. Assuming that the hydria scene illustrates a complete and actual arrangement, it demonstrates that these coarse-ware shapes functioned as props in pairs, or threes, supporting a cooking pot over a source of heat. The traces of burning sometimes preserved on the inside faces indicate contact with a fire, and their findspots, in domestic deposits often accompanied by cooking vessels, suggest a kitchen. Practical objections to the stability and convenience of the arrangement are eliminated by successful experiments, reconstructing examples with cooking pots from the same (or contemporary) deposits (Pls. 103:c, 105) found at Athens and Corinth.16


Naturally, the mere fact that an assembly imitating the hydria scene works does not prove its authenticity. But certain aspects actually recommend the arrangement as a practical one within the capabilities of Greek structural design.\(^\text{17}\) The splayed bases lend stability; the upper disk surrounds a concave surface so that only the rim itself makes contact with the supported vessel and thus fits any pot. In fact, the object is ingenious: it converts any round-bottomed cooking vessel into a stooded cooker (like a tripod cooking pot) for use over a fire.\(^\text{18}\) Moved closer together, the props will support a smaller vessel; set farther apart, they will fit a larger size, as was confirmed in experiments combining the same pair of (disparate) supports with different vessels (Pl. 105). Thus the objects are highly convenient as instruments supporting any of the known classical cooking pots (chyttra, stow pot, casserole) over a fire. Prehistoric equivalents of this shape, which likewise stabilize round-bottomed vessels over a fire or on a horizontal surface, are a reassuring supplement to the evidence for the function of the Classical shape.\(^\text{19}\) It implies a certain continuity of cooking techniques and instruments, as borne out by the long life of the clay tripod cooker.

Lexical research happily reveals both a name for this unusual object and supports its morphological relationship to other cooking implements. Given the object’s provocative shape, it is not surprising that an obscene joke in Attic comedy provides its identity. In Aristophanes’ *Peace* (890–893), Trygaeos shows the naked Theoria to the Boule and prytaneis, praising her delights and pointing out her ὁπτάων. His slave responds, ὅιμε ὁς καλόν and adds wittily:

\(^\text{17}\) An arrangement of a pot supported by two such props may function according to the structural principles of an arch. For the cooking pot acts as keystone binding the two lateral props (voussoirs) into a self-sustaining curve whose load is resolved into lateral as well as vertical components.

\(^\text{18}\) These advantages were noted by M. Leonard (“Braziers in the Bodrum Museum,” *AJA* 77, 1973 [pp. 19–25], p. 23, no. 3) in describing the successor of these objects, a brazier fitted with “trumpet-shaped supports” (see p. 401 below). Expressed in terms of plane geometry, any two spheres will intersect in a circle; thus the lower body of a cooking pot will fit on the round rim of the upper disk of a prop.


Dark Age candidates: W. D. E. Coulson, “The Pottery,” *Excavations at Nichoria in Southwest Greece, III, Dark Age and Byzantine Occupation*, W. A. McDonald et al., edd., Minneapolis 1983, p 1536 from Dark Age II level (= 10th century) described as “leg of cooking pot”, “cooking support fragment” on pl. 3-145, and “cooking leg” in fig. 3054; P 1098, pl. 3-129 (“stand for cooking pot”): “curved, burned on the interior, and has holes pierced through the sides to allow for the circulation of air” (p. 95). Dark Age III examples from Nichoria are called both “cooking supports” (Coulson, *op. cit.*, p. 108) and spools (J. Carrington Smith, “The Evidence for Spinning and Weaving,” *op. cit.*, pp. 290–291, “Note on the Clay Spools”).
As the scholiast explains, master and slave initiate a culinary joke with ὀπτάνιον, followed by a comment that the woman is already “blackened with smoke” (an allusion to her δασεὶς μήροις, according to the scholiast), apparently because the Boule used to “roast their meat” there. The joke depends on the resemblance between Theoria’s legs and τὰ λάσανα, defined by the scholiast as χυτροπόδες. This definition is repeated by Pollux (Onomastica, 10.99), who quotes another comic passage (Diokles, Melissai, fr. 8):

ἀπὸ λάσανων θερμήν ἀφαιρήσω χύτραν

According to these references, λάσανα are objects used, in the plural, to support a cooking pot (χύτρα) over a fire. The joke in Aristophanes compares Theoria’s two legs, perhaps bow-legged as well as dark, to a pair of cooking props, as identified in this article.20 No other reference illuminates the appearance of λάσανα, only their function; but the shape and culinary aspects of the hitherto mysterious objects seem appropriate to the comic passage. Previous studies of Greek cooking σκεύη and their terminology having produced no suitable match for the word, this new explanation of vessel props will also appropriate the name λάσανα for their new identity.21

The etymology of the word is obscure, disputed, and contributes little to the origin and function of λάσανα. Most attractive is Boisacq’s proposal of a λαθ-<* índh- root, by comparison to Sanskrit randh, “to cook, prepare food” (cf. randhama-m, “cooking”; Old Irish “lann”, a frying pan), which provides Indo-European culinary cognates.22 The word χυτρόπονος, when used in the plural to indicate a multiple support for cooking pots (as in Alkiphron, Parasites, 3.5), could likewise identify such a pot prop. Compound composition (χύτρα + ποῦς) and literary use (e.g. Hesiod, Works and Days, 748–749) are both more appropriate to a tripod cooking pot with legs attached, while the instrumental noun ending (-ανος) of λάσανος suits its function as a separate prop. Both words are used in the plural; one might expect the dual if a pair were standard, as suggested by Aristophanes’ Peace, the hydria scene, and the experiments (Pls. 103:c, 105). This absence of a dual alone, however, seems insufficient for requiring three λάσανα per cooking pot, as recommended by the prehistoric arrangement (footnote 19 above), its Hellenistic successor (see p. 401 below), and common sense. The most pertinent ancient evidence, both the vase-painting scene and the

20 J. Henderson (The Maculate Muse, New Haven 1975, pp. 143–144, no. 163) explains τὰ λάσανα as “trivets” but translates them as “pots [phalli]”, assuming they should have a phallic shape for the joke in question. The construction in Greek (imperfect of εἶναι with a dative of possession, τῇ βουλῇ) and the new identity for λάσανα imply instead that Theoria’s legs, not the councillors’ phalli, are being compared to λάσανα. For a modern understanding of the joke, see a Greek production of the Peace whose performance of this passage, incorporating the scholiast’s comments on Theoria’s δασεὶς μήροις, is illustrated in the popular Greek magazine Eva 14, April 4, 1985, p. 134. Cf. Hesychios, s.v.: καὶ τὰ ὀπίσθια τῶν μήρων.


joke in Aristophanes, which only works if one assumes two props to match Thoeris’s two legs, argues for two λάσανα.

It remains to consider the specialized function of these props in Greek cuisine, for they are illustrated and excavated along with other contemporary cooking arrangements, notably braziers of several types (see Catalogue below for contexts with cooking ware). According to the vase scene alone (Pl. 104), the props supported large vats for boiling meats, presumably at a higher temperature than that necessary for slower cooking (perhaps served better by a brazier containing coals) but not so intense as the heat involved in broiling directly in or over a flame. The advantage of an arrangement on props is that it allows a fire maximum exposure to oxygen, in contrast to a slower source of heat such as that provided by coals in a more protected container, a brazier. The connection between λάσανα/χυτρόποδες and high temperatures is confirmed by the description of a pot (κακκάβη) of boiling water being removed from a pair of χυτρόποδες in a private house (Alkiphron, Parasites, 3-5).

Literature on ancient cooking, most of which is quoted in Athenaios’ Deipnosophistae, includes explicit references to the various cooking and serving temperatures of foods but rarely describes instruments other than vessels. The Caere hydria scene (Pl. 104) demonstrates the boiling of certain portions, after sacrifice, butchering, and the roasting of the choice σπλάγχνα, a sequence orthodox to Greek ritual. Sanctuary finds of λάσανα indeed connect them with sacrifice and hence with subsequent boiling of meat: at Himera, for example, three λάσανα were found conveniently close to an Archaic altar (see Catalogue entries for Himera 65.98, 65.102). Even outside sanctuaries and sacrificial context, boiled meats (ἀνάβραστα κρέα) were popular and provided an efficient way of serving crowds at ancient inns and restaurants. The presence of clay props in debris suggesting public

23 The combination of pot and props may suggest a warming function to the modern imagination, such as over a lamp (?) in analogy to a modern warming-tray or fondue set, but no ancient evidence exists for such an arrangement.

24 On dishes served τὰ μὲν θερμα, τὰ δ’ ἑπανέντα, τὰ δὲ μέσως, τὰ δ’ ὄλως ἀποψύξαντα, see Athenaios, Deipnosophistai, 9.378; cf. Alexis, Paνυχις, fr. 173, 1–10 (Edmonds) = Athenaios 9.386; ibid., 9.406 b: ἀπαλόν καὶ συννεχείς διδοὺς τὸ πῦρ; Archelikos, fr. 2, 4–5 = Athenaios, 7.292 f: τὰς λοσάνας ἐπικεῖσι ἐπὶ τὸ πῦρ (τοὺς ἀνθράκας ἔρραν’ ἐλαιω πάινα καὶ ποιὸ φλόγα); for cooking over charcoal, not flame, to avoid burning (Archestratos, fr. 28, 11–12, apud Athenaios, 7.310 d). Some dishes are to be served in their cooking pots (ἀνταῖς χύτραις: Athenaios, 9.406 b = Kock, iii.487), in which case one might expect some form of support on the table.

25 See La cuisine du sacrifice (footnote 15 above), esp. Durand, op. cit., for a discussion of the different stages of preparation and consumption at a Greek sacrifice. On boiling meats at festivals, see Aristophanes, Clouds, 387 (the Panathenaic stew) or Polemon (apud Athenaios) on the Hyakinthia, discussed by L. Buit “Apropos du repas des Hyakinthia: de la consommation rituelle à l’offrande,” forthcoming in Sympotika, O. Murray, ed. To the Ricci hydria, compare the Makron cup in the Louvre (C 10918, ARV² 467, 130): Durand, loc. cit., fig. 19. Scenes of sacrifice and butchering on the exterior of the cup are succeeded by the tondo, where a man boils meat in a cauldron over a tripod: J. L. Durand and A. Schnapp, “Boucherie sacrificielle et chasses initiatiques,” in La cité des images: Religion et société en Grèce antique, Paris 1984, p. 52, fig. 78 (not a baker scraping dough from a bread bowl, as argued by Sparkes [1965, p. 163, pl. XXX:5a, b]).

26 Sparkes, 1962, pp. 129–131, for boiling and pots; boiled meats served at inns (Aristophanes, Frogs, 553): Alexis, fr. 124, 1–3, apud Athenaios, 9.383 d; Athenaios, 9.396 a–b on κρέα ζωμι (πνίκτα κρεβιών), including Aristophanes, Wasp5, 511, ἐν λοσάνι πεπυγμένον; lamb stewed in a χύτρα: Antiphanes, Aphrodisias 1–5,
“taverns” at Corinth and Athens supports this association with public meals and perhaps with stews.27 An explicit connection between these objects and the cooking of meat after a sacrifice is provided by a scholiast’s comment on the very passage which gives this object its ancient name (Aristophanes, Peace, 893–894). The scholiast identifies these objects (τὰ λάσσανα) as τὰ μαγειρεῖα, ὅπων τῇ βουλῇ σκευάζεται μετὰ τὰς θυσίας κρέα, admittedly an explanation which could be derived from context alone. But the comment does add to the evidence associating λάσσανα with outdoor cooking at large gatherings, as at a public festival with sacrifice and banquet, in addition to the ordinary domestic contexts where they are found with a variety of cooking pots.

The use of the shape is predominantly Archaic and Classical, although a few earlier predecessors and Hellenistic survivals are known. Apparently this object went out of use in the Hellenistic period, when brazier types proliferated and dominated the Greek kitchen.28 An early Hellenistic (?) brazier from Bodrum suggests a transitional type, incorporating the individual props into a two-prop brazier.29 This form is ultimately replaced by braziers with three lugs, bearded satyr heads facing into the upper bowl, their beards supporting cooking pots.30 Since the brazier, however, serves primarily as a portable hearth or container of coals for cooking temperatures different from those used with λάσσανα, one assumes that a form of cylindrical cooking stand replaces them.31

27 Athenaios, 10.449 b. Cf. BCH 91, 1967, p. 834, fig. 2 (Argos, Su 76b) for a terracotta group of women cooking, one stirring a deep chytra on three vertical props.

28 E.g., Athenian Agora P 30453, P 30617, P 30618 from Deposit U 13:1, Shear, 1975, pp. 358–362 (deposit under study for publication by Alison Adams, who graciously allowed me to include the examples from the well in this article); Corinth C 412–414 and Lot 1937-1, from Well 1937-1 ( = Corinth VII, iii, pp. 216–217, Deposit 79) and Lot 1937-2 (drain at b–f: 19–20, Corinth VII, iii, p. 217, Deposit 80): see Catalogue below for details.


29 Leonard, op. cit. (footnote 18 above), p. 23, no. 3 (Bodrum Museum 140), ill. I:4, 5; cf. Athenian Agora P 16521 (Agora XII, no. 2019, pl. 97, fig. 19). Three “trumpet-shaped supports” with pierced holes in their concave upper disks, resembling the top half of the classical props, crown the firebowl and would have held a cooking vessel; the fact that there are three of them argues for a reconstruction with three, rather than two, supports as in the Archaic illustration and modern experiments (Pls. 103c, 104, 105).


31 Agora XII, no. 2016, pp. 232, 377, pl. 97, an Archaic version of horseshoe shape; E. Brann, The Athenian Agora, VIII, Late Geometric and Protoattic Pottery, Princeton 1962, p. 55, no. 211, pl. 11, p. 103, no. 626, pl. 40, for Archaic and prehistoric versions. This cooking stand continues to be popular in Italy (see footnote 28 above) after the Classical period.
A related form of prop turns up in the debris of ancient bronze casting and could have been used to support molds (often set upside down during the casting process) or smaller containers such as crucibles. Thus, the examples of props/λάσανον found amidst equipment from bronze- or ironworking could have served a practical purpose in smelting or casting but as a prop for molds and crucibles, not as the bellows’ nozzles they have been called (p. 395 above). Λάσανα could likewise have supported molds or vessels in ceramic kilns, where they have also been found, and would provide the same circulation of heat or oxygen to undersides of large vessels or tiles.

A final observation on the word λάσανον helps clarify what has obscured its identity and appearance for ancient and modern scholars. While the cooking prop disappears in the Hellenistic period, the word λάσανον survives to indicate a portable privy or night-stool (λασανίτης δίφρος). This second denotation must have been contemporary with the culinary one, for it is also familiar in 5th-century comedy, later appearing in medical texts and lexica. This meaning has a longer and more active life than do λάσανα in the Greek kitchen, as it survives into the Latin lasanum (Petronius, Satyricon, 41.9, Horace, Satires 1.6.109). An Archaic Greek example for infants survives from the Athenian Agora (Pl. 103:b). Its size and shape resemble a brazier, one of the explanations considered upon discovery before a vase illustration clarified its function. For both brazier and potty are two-tiered clay stands with an upper bowl separated from the lower by a pierced surface, and both are designed to receive two objects (the brazier holds coals below, pot above, while the potty supports a seated child above, a container below). Thus at some time when brazier and λάσανον (stool) resembled each other, the latter may have borrowed the name from the former. Etymologically, only brazier and prop shared a claim to the culinary term,

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32 Mattusch, op. cit. (footnote 12 above), pp. 352–353, 356, pl. 86 (C 21–23, from the 4th-century “Keyhole Foundry”), pp. 359–363, H 7 and 8, pl. 90 (two of 15 small props from a Hellenistic mud-brick foundry). Dr. Mattusch also informed me that similar props, in the form of clay-wrapped amphora handles, turned up in use fill (1st–2nd century after Christ) of the Gymnasium Foundry at Corinth, to be published by her. I am grateful to Dr. Mattusch for her expertise and advice on the various props and their relationship to metallurgy.

33 Grandjean (op. cit. [footnote 5 above]) has encouraged this connection to kilns; one notes discoveries of λάσανα near casting pits, kilns, or with wasters at Athens, Argamum, Histria, Klazomenai, Nymphaeum, Paestum, Sybaris, and Thasos.

34 Aristophanes, fr. 462 (Edmonds) and scholia to Peace, 1224–1239; Eupolis, fr. 224; Kratinos, fr. 49; Pherekrates, fr. 88; Plato Comicus, fr. 116. Henderson (op. cit. [footnote 20 above], p. 191, note 409) calls this type of λάσανον “a trivet for a chamberpot”, a combination of the two ancient meanings but one which violates the discrete existence of the two ancient objects. Moreover, the λάσανον (chamber pot) can appear in the singular, λάσανα (props) appears always in the plural. Medical texts: Hippokrates, Πέρι ἑπικυής, 8; ἰδεμ, Πέρι Συρρήτων, 9, 2; lexicographers: Pollux, Onomasticon, 10, 44; Moeris, 202.30.


36 Athenian Agora P 18010, H. 0.343 m.: H. A. Thompson, The Athenian Agora: A Guide to the Excavations and Museum, Princeton 1976, pp. 240–241, fig. 125; M. Davies, “ Commodes and Cuirasses: Aristophanes’ Peace and a Polygnotan Painting” (paper presented at the General Meetings of the Archaeological Institute of America, 1983), abstract AJA 84, 1980, p. 203. I would like to thank Elizabeth Carlyle Camp for posing graciously for the photograph Pl. 103:b, and John McK. Camp II for many helpful contributions to this article. Among other insights, he points out that the infant’s “commode” must also have served simply to hold a child who could not yet walk, hence served as a chair, as well. This would bring the two functions of λάσανον closer in purpose (their primary function is one of support, whether of pot or child) as well as in form.
λάσανον. When λάσανα (pot props) disappeared by ca. 300 B.C., no commentator could sort out these meanings easily. Only in modern times have excavations produced both actual examples and archaic illustrations to restore an identity to λάσανα.

CATALOGUE

![Diagram of Corinth C-37-412]

**Fig. 1. Corinth C-37-412**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-37-412</td>
<td>(Pls. 101:b, 103:c) D. base (oval) 0.105–0.109 m. Restored handle, crown; fold on interior face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fig. 1; Pls. 101:a, 103:c)</td>
<td>C-37-414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restored strap handle; deep fold on interior face.</td>
<td>Lot 1937-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan, <em>loc. cit.</em>, fig. 11 (&quot;funnel&quot;). H. 0.164; D. rim 0.062, base 0.103 m.</td>
<td>Lot 1937-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-37-413</td>
<td>Ibid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ATHENS

Agora P 9695  
_Agora_ XII, p. 377 (under no. 2014).
(Pl. 101:c)  
Agora, hole west of Grave V, Area F/10-5/7, near casting pit (Deposit F 5:5); 4th-century context.
P.H. 0.093; D. rim 0.065 m.
Wheelmade, then bent and twisted. Coarse, orange clay, burnt gray on top and inside.

Agora P 15119  
_Agora_ XII, pp. 231–232, 377, no. 2015, pl. 96.
(Fig. 2; Pls. 101:d, 105)  
Agora, Deposit H 19:1, rock-cut pit, 4th-century fill.
H. 0.117; D. rim 0.06 m.
Coarse, orange clay with quartz and mica grit, burnt gray, especially inside face.

Agora P 18327  
_Agora_ XII, pp. 231–232, 377, pl. 96, no. 2014.
(Pl. 102:a)  
Agora, Deposit C 19:15, house fillings, 4th century.
P.H. 0.148; D. 0.06, hole 0.013 m.
Missing lower body, base; pronounced dent on inside face at midpoint; domed crown. Gritty, orange clay, gray burnt patches.

Agora P 30617  
Shear, 1975, p. 361.
(Fig. 3; Pl. 102:b)  
Agora, Deposit U 13:1, well in Room 6, shops below Roman Stoa (late 5th and early 4th centuries; closed before 380 B.C.).
P.H. 0.16; D. base 0.11, rim 0.073, hole 0.025 m.
Wheelmade, then bent; “leans” towards far side of photo and drawing.

Agora P 30618  
_Ibid._
(Pl. 102:c)  
P.H. 0.13, D. rim 0.064, hole 0.025 m.
Broken at bottom; probably formed matching pair with P 30617. Coarse, orange clay with white inclusions; surface burnt with patches.

Agora P 30453  
Shear, 1975, p. 361, note 62, pl. 81:c.
(Fig. 4; Pls. 102:d, 103:a, 105)  
H. 0.16; D. base 0.13, rim 0.076, hole 0.018 m.
Coarse, orange clay with dark grit; surface and interior burnt in patches.
MILETOS


Subgeometric destruction level in area of early settlement, near Hellenistic city wall.

63 s 89

H. 0.184, D. base 0.12 m.

Reddish brown fabric, much mica grit.


Insula west of Bouleuterion (domestic contexts, 6th–3rd centuries).

P.H. 0.100–0.222; D. rim 0.100–0.116, upper hole 0.020–0.038 m.

Numerous fragments, some open, some closed; lateral holes below handles. Hard-fired fabric, sandy/gritty particles, rough/matt surface with “Brandspuren”.

THERA


Archaic votive deposit (“Massenfund”) near Grave 13 (cremation in chytra) of necropolis, containing several hundred miniature vessels, burnt bones and ash, figurines and astragali. Three miniature examples.

P.H. 0.09 m.

Coarse, red fabric.

CRETE:

KAVOUSHI (Kastro)


BLACK SEA

(U.S.S.R.):

HERMONASSA


Archaic pits and houses, 6th-century settlement.

Fifteen fragments, some pierced completely, others with non-communicating upper and lower openings; lateral holes in lower base.

H. 0.20–0.25; D. base 0.12–0.15, upper hole 0.04–0.05 m.
Nymphaeum


Archaic votive debris in rock-cut pit and kiln, Demeter sanctuary.

Fifteen fragments, open at both ends, with pronounced vertical fold opposite handle; 28 fragments of solid examples (both ends closed) without grooves; vent holes in bodies.

Olbia


Panticapaeum

Zeest and Marchenko, Panticapa-um (Mat. i Issl. po Arkh. SSSR 103), Leningrad 1962, pp. 164–165, figs. 23, 24: “Conical objects (lamp stands?).”

Archaic settlement; found with cooking vessels and braziers.

Numerous fragments; deep furrow (finger traced) opposite handle, lateral hole below handle; traces of burning on upper part; some double-pierced without continuous opening, others completely hollow. Est. H. 0.22–0.24; D. 0.10–0.12 m.

ITALY:

Ischia (Pithe-cusae)


Unstratified (dump in water channel on east slope of Monte Vico acropolis: Bronze Age to 2nd-cen-

Two “mantici”, completely pierced; lateral hole opposite handle base. Est. H. ca. 0.22 m.

Paestum


Agora: debris over Circular Struc-

Four examples, all missing rim above loop handle; wheelmade, deep furrow on inner face. Fabric: gray clay, micaceous, inclusions.

Ibid., figs. 62, 76. Square 60.II.

Est. p.H. 0.15; D. base 0.09 m.

Pronounced offset base with flaring profile.
Uninventoried Fragments of a third one, identical to Alv 7 and 8.


Insula II, room 14 (block 8, pp. 109–113). H. 0.09 m.

Missing handle, parts of base, rim.

Pinkish clay, grayish slip.


Insula II, room 23 (block 10, pp. 118–112).


Insula II, room 27 (block 10, pp. 118–121; joins room 23, [see H. 67.773, 6 above], via corridor).

H. 0.10–0.20 m.

Coarse, pinkish clay, traces of slip.

FRANCE


Archaic settlement levels, found with iron slag.

I.416 Level i.

H. ca. 0.25; D. rim 0.10, D. base 0.15; Th. 0.016–0.018 m.

Coarse, pinkish clay, with quartz inclusions.

SICILY:

**Himera**


Altar area, 32 m. east of Temple B; (East Zone, sectors I–II); found with Archaic pottery.

H 65.98 H. 0.17; D. base 0.135, rim 0.109 m. Restored from fragments; pierced through. Coarse, grayish clay.

H 65.102 H. 0.16; D. base 0.13; rim 0.102 m.

**Paestum,** Heraion (Foce del Sele)


**Sybaris**


Archaic settlement area, including kiln.

Sibari 23764b *Ibid.*, no. 539, p. 350, figs. 338, 362. H. 0.23; D. base 0.12, top 0.05 m.

Sibari 25766 *Ibid.*, no. 540, fig. 321. H. 0.105; D. base 0.075, top 0.04 m.

Sibari 25035 *Ibid.*, no. 541, figs. 321, 362. H. 0.13; D. base 0.10, top 0.08 m.

Sibari, St. 438 A. Romualdi, “Stombi 1972,” in *Sibari IV (NSc* 28, 1974, Suppl.), pp. 47, 146, no. 5, fig. 33: “Architectural terracotta” (*sic*). Stombi, Area 69, trench I, level 1. H. 0.21; D. base 0.085 m.

Variant prop: pyramidal shape crowned by inturned volute (cf. footnote 5 above). Fabric: coarse, pink clay, quartz inclusions.

**Mascardo**


Archaic settlement levels, found with iron slag.

I.416 Level i.

H. ca. 0.25; D. rim 0.10, D. base 0.15; Th. 0.016–0.018 m.

Coarse, pinkish clay, with quartz inclusions.
SARAH P. MORRIS

I.852
Level d.
H. 0.14 m.
Holes pierced around base; concave side marked by deep furrow from top to bottom. Coarse clay, local amphora/pithos fabric. Blackened around mouth, on one side.

I.1524
Level b.
Fragment (base).

I.1.368
Fragment (body with furrow: p.H. 0.12 m.)

I.1.369
Fragment (base).

La Monédière/ Jully, *Opus Rom* 6, 1968, p. 61, Bessan (Hérault) pl. VIII:II a–c.
P. H. 0.19; D. rim 0.14, interior D. 0.05 m.
Wheelmade; missing handle, foot, most of rim. Brownish fabric.


SPAIN:
AMPURIAS (Emborio)

Almagro, *ArchEspArq* 18, 1945, p. 67, fig. 13:3 (said to be one of many found at the site); *ibid.*, Barcelona 1951, p. 128, fig. 43; J. J. Jully, *ArchEspArq* 48, 1975, p. 80, fig. 80. Torreon del Vigia, Neapolis, Level II (B). Classical phase of settlement, mixed Ionian and Iberian pottery.

Museo Monografico

Two complete examples with offset disk base, loop handle below flaring mouth.

Est. H. ca. 0.20 m.

FIG. 5. Antiken Museum, West Berlin 688x, 1

FIG. 6. Antiken Museum, West Berlin 688x, 2
CYPRUS:
Kourion

TS-1982-1
H. 0.17; D. rim 0.058, base 0.095, upper hole 0.017 m. Wheelmade, vertical depression on inside face; burned (area not indicated).

TS-1982-2
H. 0.16; D. rim 0.052, base 0.10 m. Wheelmade, burned.

NO PROVENANCE
Antiken-museum, West Berlin
688x, 1 (Fig. 5)
688x, 2 (Fig. 6)
Inv. 688x, unpublished.
H. 0.2; D. base 0.125, rim 0.095m.
Upper disk continuous (no opening), lower body open inside to midpoint.
H. 0.19; diam base 0.092, rim 0.07 m.
Solid through.
Both of heavy, coarse, reddish fabric, tempered with quartz.

Sarah P. Morris

Yale University
Department of Classics
Box 1967 Yale Station
New Haven, CT 06520
a. Corinth C-37-412

b. Corinth C-37-413

c. Athenian Agora P 9695

d. Athenian Agora P 15119

Scale 1:2

SARAH P. MORRIS: ΛΑΣΑΝΑ: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ANCIENT GREEK KITCHEN
a. Athenian Agora P 18327
b. Athenian Agora P 30617
c. Athenian Agora P 30618
d. Athenian Agora P 30453

Scale 1:2

Sarah P. Morris: ΛΑΣΑΝΑ: A Contribution to the Ancient Greek Kitchen
a. Athenian Agora P 30453 (top)

b. Athenian Agora P 18010


**Sarah P. Morris: ΛΑΣΑΝΑ: A Contribution to the Ancient Greek Kitchen**
a. Shoulder scene, Ionian hydria, Villa Giulia Museum (courtesy Soprintendenza Archeologica dell' Etruria Meridionale. Neg. no. 89190)

b. Detail of a (DAI-Rome, neg. no. 75 304)

SARAH P. MORRIS: ΛΑΣΑΝΑ: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ANCIENT GREEK KITCHEN
a. Athenian Agora P30641 (above), P 15119 and P30453 (below). Scale 3:7

b. Athenian Agora (chytra) P30640 (above), P 15119 and P 30453 (below). Scale ca. 1:3

Sarah P. Morris: ΛΑΣΑΝΑ: A Contribution to the Ancient Greek Kitchen