

NOTE ON A VESSEL OF UNUSUAL TYPE FROM THE ABDERA “TEIAN” NECROPOLIS: MINI-“FALAIEFF KRATER” OR THYMIATERION?

Pierre DUPONT^a, Constantina KALLINTZI^b

^a Maison de l’Orient, ArAr lab, Lyon ; e-mail : pierre.dupont@mom.fr

^b Archaeological Museum, Abdera; e-mail: ckallintzi@gmail.com

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Abstract: The Abdera “Teian” necropolis has revealed a Greek vase with unusual morphological features, at first sight recalling those of the so-called “Falaieff kraters” but which might well alternatively represent a variety of portable thymiaterion, issued from a later 4th / early 3rd century BC tumular context.

Cuvinte-cheie: Abdera, Grecia, necropola coloniștilor din Teos, ceramică greacă, „Falaieff-krater”, thymiaterion, perioadă clasică

Rezumat: În necropola „teiană” de la Abdera s-a scos la iveală un vas grecesc cu caracteristici morfologice neobișnuite. Provenit dintr-un context tumular de la sfârșitul secolului IV / începutul secolului III î.Chr., acest vas, care la o primă vedere amintește de kratererele de tip „Falaieff”, ar putea corespunde unei variante a vasului de tip thymiaterion.

Among the finds from the 1990 made in the tumular necropolis of “Teian” Abdera¹, an almost complete vessel² of medium size³ stands out by its unusual morphological features (Fig. 1). The exact location of the find – so-called *Enagismos* XI – corresponds to the offerings area of a group of three tumuli⁴, the pottery assemblage of which⁵ spans the period from the second half of the 4th to the first decades of the 3rd century BC.

In side view the general profile is that of a flat-bottomed straight-sided deep bowl resting on a slightly protruding ring base. Two horizontal handles, diametrically inserted halfway up, and a massive spout, unexpectedly unpierced, vaguely evoke the silhouette of a *lekane*. In upper view, it appears that we are not faced at all with an open shape but with a decked one, the central recessed opening of which being surrounded with a collar pierced through by a row of circular holes, itself edged with a wide flaring lip. The narrow central opening may have received a small conical button-topped lid recovered from the same context, made of similar clay and with a compatible diameter⁶. Both the thick flat bottom and the clay’s soft firing clearly exclude the possibility of an orthodox cooking-pot.

Such morphological features correspond to a portable vessel, the interpretation of which merits further

consideration, above all the exact function of the recessed collar with a row of holes surrounding the rather narrow opening.

At first sight, such a device appears clearly related to the one already reported on the Attic r.f. bell-kraters of so-called “Falaieff type”⁷, the function of which was tentatively linked by Stella Drougou with ritual wine libations, either for a sparkling wine or for preparing various recipes of mulled wine that needed straining before serving. Such an interpretation of a wine content appears quite reasonable in the case of large-sized krater shapes ($\emptyset = 35$ cm or so), *a fortiori* elaborated r.f. ones, intended for ceremonial purposes. In profile, it is quite apparent that we are not faced with a genuine bell-krater, but with a stamnid container that was deliberately disguised as a krater: fitted all around its convex shoulder with an overhanging straightened gutter collar, obviously intended to contain the overflow of a liquid content when carried during a procession, whereas the peripheral row of small holes around the gutter allowed overflowed wine to drain back inside the vessel. In that case, there is no real need to connect the peripheral collar with either the filtration processing of mulled wine or with the bubbles of sparkling wine⁸. The same observation applies to an interesting find from Maroneia, viz. a fragmentary “bell-

¹ See Kallintzi 2004, esp. p. 274–277; Kallintzi 2006.

² Abdera Museum, inv. no. MA 1756.

³ H = 11 cm; \emptyset rim = 14 cm; \emptyset + spout = 17.7 cm; \emptyset base = 6.8 cm; \emptyset opening = 5 cm; \emptyset row of vent holes = 12 cm; \emptyset vent holes = 0.5 cm; handles w. = ca. 5 cm; spout w. = 5 cm.

⁴ Lakkotis plot.

⁵ Ca. 65 vessels.

⁶ Abdera Museum, inv. no. MA 7270. From its size, it is difficult to see what other vessel the small-sized conical lid might have fitted.

⁷ Drougou 1979.

⁸ The case of their assumed smaller Etruscan bucchero predecessors (McPhee 2000, p. 477, fig. 17) appears more questionable, because they seem to have been really intended for straining liquids judging from the numerous rows of holes and opposed pourers.