

KERCH STYLE: TOWARDS A LOCAL BRANCH EVIDENCED AT APOLLONIA PONTICA?

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Abstract: The first chemical results already obtained on representative finds of red-figured vases from Apollonia decorated in the Kerch style have revealed a non-Attic chemical pattern, thus clearly pointing to the fact that Athens had no monopoly in the manufacture of these somewhat “kitsch” wares smothered in gilt and added colours. Even if most of our samples belonging to the Kerch style are falling together with other black-glazed wares into a geochemical group differing from the local one of common wares, it might well be only for technological requirements. Further lab investigations will now try to determine whether we are faced with another local group or with imports from some other Pontic centre of manufacture, Panticapeum / present-day Kerch coming a priori to mind high up among the possible candidates!

Cuvinte-cheie: Apollonia Pontica, Bulgaria, ceramică greacă cu figuri roșii, stil Kerch, sec. IV î.Chr.

Rezumat: Primele rezultate obținute în urma analizei fizico-chimice făcute pe exemplare reprezentative de vase cu figuri roșii de la Apollonia, decorate în stilul Kerch, au scos în evidență compoziții non-atică, demonstrând, deci, că Atena nu a avut monopolul fabricării ceramicii de factură, mai degrabă „kitsch”, acoperită cu aur și rețușe colorate. Chiar dacă cele mai multe dintre eșantioanele care ar indica acest stil formează, împreună cu alte vase cu firnis negru, un grup geochimic deosebit de ceramica uzuală de fabricație locală, aceasta s-ar putea datora unor imperative tehnologice. Continuarea cercetării își propune clarificarea apartenenței pieselor la un alt grup local distinct sau a provenienței acestora din importuri din alte centre pontice de fabricație, precum Panticapeum, actualul Kerch, considerat sursa cea mai previzibilă!

The Greek settlement of *Apollonia Pontica* (present-day Sozopol), ranking among the most prominent ones along the Western Black Sea coast, already aroused the interest of several generations of excavators.

Since 2013, within the framework of the French Archaeological Team headed by Alexandre Baralis (Musée du Louvre) and thanks to the financial support of the French National Agency for Research (ANR), a programme of archaeometrical studies devoted to the determination of origin of pottery finds from Apollonia has been undertaken by the Lyon ArAr Lab, which up to now already involved more than 270 various samples, the chemical patterns of which have evidenced a partition into several main groups, viz.: common wares, roof-tiles, fine wares from the Kalfata necropolis, transport amphoras of Heraklean type, imports from a still unidentified centre located along the Straits as well as Attic fine wares.

The 2019 season of chemical analyses was mainly focused on the classification of fine wares, viz. black-glazed as well as black- and red-figured ones in order to test the importance of local imitations. The most

interesting results were obtained on specimens of 4th century BC red-figured vases with polychrome addings decorated in the “Kerch style”, all selected by the excavators themselves.

Even numerically in a minority in comparison with the group of Attic imports, a separate one, assumed to be of local manufacture, within which finds from the Kalfata necropolis are predominant, unexpectedly includes most of our samples decorated in the Kerch style (Fig. 1), whereas only two of them are falling outside it among the imports, seemingly rather Pergamenian than Attic ones (Fig. 2), a lab result thus inducing *de facto* to reconsider the case of this prolific “Apollonia Painter”, at first distinguished by Karl Schefold¹, later on less clear-cut renamed “Apollonia Group” by John Beazley², in questioning its attribution in terms of place of manufacture instead stylistically: if it appears that we are not faced with Attic imports to *Apollonia*, does the alternative of interpreting them as locally made products necessarily prevail from now on? In that case, are they to be assigned to the hands of an Attic potter, or even of an

¹ Schefold 1934, p. 102–104, pl. 18–19, 2:2; Boháč 1958, p. 49–50.

² Beazley, *ARV*, p. 1482, eight pieces recorded of which only from *Apollonia* (Nr. 5–6); see also Reho 1990, p. 50, 110–111.