

# STUDIA HERCYNIA XVI/2



PRAGAE 2012

### III. STUDIES

#### 7. Local production centres of Megarian bowls in the Black Sea and Thrace

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with pls. XIII-XIV

*Summary:* Besides the main exporting centres (Athens, Ephesus, Pergamon) lesser quality bowls, partly copied from better models, were made by local potters in many North Aegean and Pontic Greek cities. The Megarian bowls signed KIPBEI date from the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.. and were apparently made in the North-western part of the Pontic area, most probably in Olbia.

*Keywords:* Megarian bowls, Hellenistic pottery, Black Sea, Kirbei

##### 1. Minor ateliers in the North Aegean and Black Sea cities and beyond

Megarian bowls had several main centres of production, of which first Athens, later Ephesus, Macedonia and Pergamon were the most important (Bouzek 2006. Rotroff 1982), but many local potters produced their mainly less sophisticated imitations. Pierre Dupont in a brief contribution to the last Black Sea congress in Istanbul in 2009 mentioned clay analyses showing that local clay was used on some of the Megarian bowls similar to those from the main centres, and the study of taken-over patterns, starting with the Delos "Plagiaire" of Laumonier (1977), opened the discussion on possibilities of taking over stamps from the leading workshops elsewhere.

Some amount of locally made Megarian bowls was produced in the North Aegean Greek cities, as clear from several small publications in *Archaiologikon Deltion* and *Archaiologika Analekta ex Makedonias kai Thrakis*, and from objects on display in the museums of Kavalla, Komotini, Maroneia, Thasos and elsewhere (cf. Karadima 1997 and Rotroff 2010). elsewhere (cf. Karadima 1997 and Rotroff 2010). The Italian publication of a kiln with fragments of moulds and bowls from Hefaisteia has shown different style of them here from eastern Greece, with parallels in the Peloponnese, Pella and Demetrias (Massa 1900) as did those from Pella (Akamates 1993).

The Popilius workshop was successful in Campania; the last producer did not glaze his bowls, preferring the sharply cut relief (cf. Puppo 1995), as did in the Black Sea Demetrios from Panticapaeum (Bouzek 2007, 1232 with bibl.) and the more modest Dacian imitations. Several other workshops produced them in the Black Sea cities, notably in its NW corner, while from Apollonia and Mesembria the Attic and later Ephesian workshops took the leading position. The two bowls in Pilsen from Kerch (Pl. XIII: 1-2 and Fig. 1: 1-2) belong to this class.

The Dacian bowls produced near Bucarest were half barbarian, and the quality of the main exporting centres – first Athens, later Ephesus, Macedonia with Homeric bowls and in the first century especially Pergamon, was not reached by most of local producers (cf. Domăneanțu 2000, 119-122, 144-146 ; Guldager Bilde 1993, 201; Bouzek 2005). This does



not mean that other ateliers did not produce Megarian bowls, and sometimes with larger success, like in Kyme, where the new Italian excavations brought to light much larger complex of moulds and bowls than it was published earlier, and one of its products was found even at Histria (Domăneanțu 2000, 112)..

The new study of bowls found in Romania, most notable in the Constanța, București, Braila and Tulcea museums, for which I am grateful to the keepers of the collections, and also for the kind invitation to a series of conferences in these cities especially to Valeriu Sîrbu, helped me to recognize that many of the items studied more properly from Greek cities in the territory of Romania are apparently products from local workshops in the area. This was also the case with some bowls studied personally in the Chișinău museum, and it applies also to the two bowls from Kerch in the Pilsen museum. One with pine-cone decoration imitates Ephesian bowls, the second is of the class well represented in Olbia (CVA Pilsen pl. 40; Bouzek 1990, pl. 14: 1-2, cf. fig. 28; here **Pl. XIII: 1-2**). This conclusion was also confirmed by Catrinel Domăneanțu in her book (Domăneanțu 2000, 119-122; cf. Bouzek 2007, 1231-1233) and also in personal conversation with her in Bucearest. It should be noted, however, that some silver phalerae reputedly or certainly found in the Eastern Balkans are closely similar in their decoration to the North-West Pontic Megarian bowls, cf. e.g the three new phalerae in the Bojkov collection (Marazov 2011, nos.185-187, here **Pl. XIII: 6**).

Therefore the time should also be ripe to return again to the question of production centre of the KIRBEI bowls.

## 2. The Kirbei bowls: List of finds (cf. also Rotroff 2010, 70-72)

### Olbia:

1. Uvarov, *Izsledovanija o drevnostach Južnoj Rossii* 55, pl. 19: 14
- 2-3. Moskva, *Istoricheski muzej. Zapiski Imp. Russkogo arch. obshchestva* V. 383 with fig.
- 4-6. Odessa, *Štern Izvestija Arch. Komissii* 3, 98
- 7-12. Four bowls and one amphora from coll. Vogell, R. Zahn, *JdI* 23 1908, 49-50 note 6, nos. 13, 14, 20, 21; 28, cf. p. 45 Also Vogell 1908, nos. (**Fig. 2: 1-3**), partly now in Bonn, Tübingen and Würzburg.: Zahn, *JdI* 1903, 59f. fig. 13.
- 13-14. Levi, *Olbia, I* (1940), 124 no. 3 pl. 25: 3 and p. 327.
15. Levi, *Temenos i Agora*, 252 fig. 13: 3 (no. 326).

### Kerch (Panticapaeum):

- 1-2. v. Štern, *Izvestija Arch. Komissii* 3, 98.
- 3-4. Mithridates' hill. Loseva, *Materiali i Issledovanija* 103, no. 140 fig. 4: 2 (brown clay with mica, grey-reddish brown glaze) and fig. 4: 4.
5. O. Jentel, *Eirene* 3 1964, 115, 117, pl. XIV, Louvre CA 2287 (**Pl. XIII : 3-5**)
- 6-X. V. S. Zabelina, *Soobshchenia. Gos. Muzeja Istorii Iskusstva* 7 (1984), 169 gives the figure that 5 % of the imported bowls at Panticapaeum are of the Kirbei workshop and related Also V.S. Zabelina, in: Koshelenko, G.A. et alii, eds., *Antichnye goroda severnogo Prichernomorja* 1983, pl. 163: 8 and 8a (=Bouzek 1990, 108 fig. 32: 8-9)

Chersonese: Kociushko-Valjuzhinich, *Izvestija Arch. Komissii* 4 1902, 85

Myrmekeion: V. Gajdukevich, *Mirmekij* II, 79 fig. 87

Histria: C. Domăneanțu, *Histria XI, Les bols hellénistiques à décor en relief. București* 2000, 116-119 pl. 40



Tomis: M. Bucovaia, *Necropole elenistice la Tomis, Constanța* 1967, 122ff.  
R. Ocheseanu, *Pontice* 2 nos. 18, 19, figs. 29-34

Tyras: P. Nichorescu, *Ephemeris Dacoromana* I 1924 no. 13, p. 399 fig.

Delos: F. Courby, *Les vases grecs à relief*, 1922, 411, pl. X vy; Laumonier, *Délos* 31, 7, 13.

Rhodes: Mentioned by, A.U. Kossatz, *Funde aus Milet V*, 1, *Die megarischen Becher*, 1990, 136 note 648.

Samothrace: Rotroff 2010, 72, fig. 6.5

Kyme: CVA Bruxelles 3, pl. 4: 25. None among the material I could see from Kyme in Istanbul and Ali Aga.

„Asia Minor“, Courby 1922, 408 n. 3, in the Louvre, gift Gaudin.

CVA Schloss Faissanerie pl. 95: 1-2

The calyx usually consists of acanthus and palm leaves; the outline of leaves is especially stressed and the rim raised, what is stylistically rather late feature among the Megarian bowls. Some birds appear between the leaves, exceptionally even human figures (Levi, *Olbia* I 1940, 124 no. 3 pl. 12, cf. **Pl. XIII: 3-4** and **Fig. 2**). The style is derived from the Northeast Anatolian school, most probably from the area of Aeolis (Kyme- Myrina – Troy). A woman head with tower crown - a city goddess - is shown in the centre of the bottom, surrounded with the signature. The glaze is usually described as grey to brown, sometimes reddish, but sometimes black or even red (nos. 10-14 from Olbia).

The pieces I was able to investigate personally (Moscow, Sankt-Petersburg, Würzburg, Bonn, Tübingen) have fine brown clay, a rather thin shard and the glaze is thin, rather fine, reddish brown to grey with a 'violet' metallic shade. It generally holds well to the surface, but it is worn-off on the edges, where the layer was thinner. For me in the late seventies the bowls seemed to be of a quality surpassing the other attempts to produce Megarian bowls in the North Pontic area (Bouzek 1990, 61, 65-66, 72-74); therefore I agreed with those who looked to Asia Minor, like one of the main experts in the area, V.S. Zabelina. But now the situation shifted, and the NW Black Sea became the main candidate. No new excavations of Greek and Bithynian cities in north-western Anatolia have as yet brought new evidence of the Kirbei bowls in this area and the singular finds in Samothrace, Delos, Kyme (?) and Rhodes seem to show that their penetration south of the Pontic region was exceptional.

Most of the items have been found at Olbia and it is therefore understandable that some scholars (Courby, Zahn, Levi, Blavatskij) suggested a production centre in the Northwest Pontic area already in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the frame of all this new evidence, from which the direct sensual perception should not be ousted, only enlarged by chemical and petrography analyses, it seems now even to me much more likely that the Kirbei bowls were made in Olbia; the above compiled list makes clear that Olbia yielded more Kirbei bowls as yet than any other site, though Panticapaeum cannot be completely excluded from the list of possible candidates. The custom of putting names of potters on terracotta figurines and relief bowls started in mid second century B.C.. The stylistic dating of activity of the Kirbei workshop into ca. 150-100 B.C., as also suggested on the base of similarity of the city goddess with crown on them with those on Hellenistic coins, has also been confirmed by the current chronology of Rhodian amphorae with which some Kirbei bowls have been found (Rotroff 2010). It seems therefore to be confirmed again as the most probable date of activity of the potter Kirbe(ios). The floruit of the Kirbei workshop falls into the Late Hellenistic world, still



only partly influenced in the Black Sea by the rise of the Roman empire after its annexe of Macedonia, Greece and Pergamon. The activity of the Kirbei workshop ended at the beginnings of the Mithridates' wars against Rome, in which the Pontic cities stood on the side of the king, who promised them liberty, and also the Bosporean kingdom and Olbiopolitai participated in this dream.

Anyway, the fabricant who signed his bowls KIPBEI could have been proud on his products. His relief bowls were successful and could be measured also by the stick used for the potters in the Aegean; therefore many years of controversy continued whether the bowls were made in Olbia or in the north-western part of Asia Minor.

### 3. Not all bowls were formed from stamped moulds only

This idea was righteously abandoned for the overwhelming majority of Megarian bowls, but some exceptions existed. Some of the less high quality bowls make an impression that they were copies of better products made by remoulding the whole vessel with slight retouch. This concerns some bowls with only slightly impressed relief. This method was probably applied also in some workshops producing other modest bowls in Syria and Lebanon, where I had the possibility to study them personally.<sup>1</sup> Such method was usual in the production of lamps and terracotta figurines, where successive generations of smaller size have already been studied, for the the latter notably by A. Muller (Muller 1995, cf. Bouzek 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> Notably in Beirut, Damscus and Aleppo, in connection with publication of the Beirut excavations and of the Hrozný bowls from ell Erfad.

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#### Figures:

Fig. 1. North Pontic bowls from the Kerch area in Pilsen, after CVA Pilsen.

Fig. 2: 1-3. Decoration of Kirbei bowls, after Zahn

Pl. XIII: 1-2. North Pontic bowls from near Kerch, after CVA Pilsen, 3-4. KIRBEI bowl in the Louvre, 5 silver bowl in the Bojkov collection, Sofia.

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank to C. Domăneanțu, P. Dupont, P. Guldager Bilde, Ch. Karadima, A. Muller, E. Redina and S. Rotroff for useful discussions on problems of Megarian bowls. The article was prepared in the frame of the project of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic no. P405/11/0098: Greeks, Thracians and Celts in the Balkans and Central Europe: Emporion Pistiros.

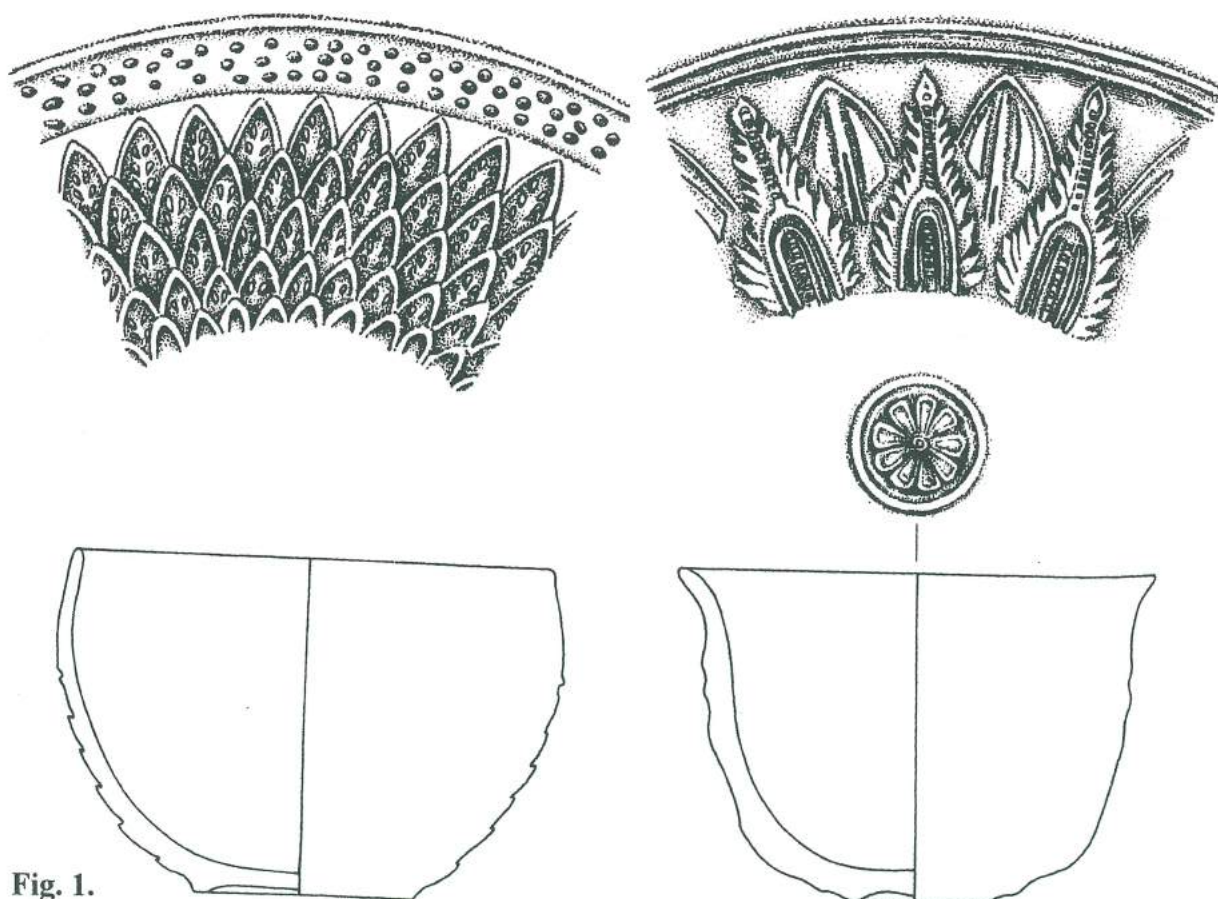
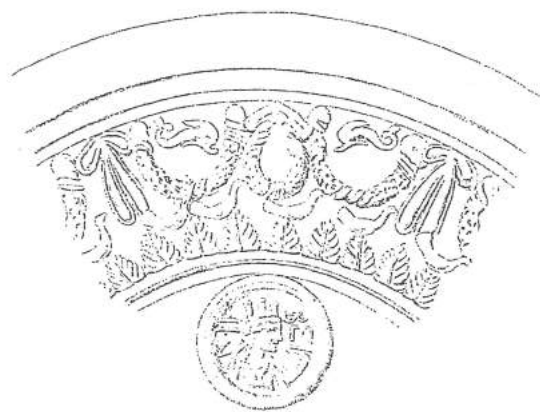


Fig. 1.





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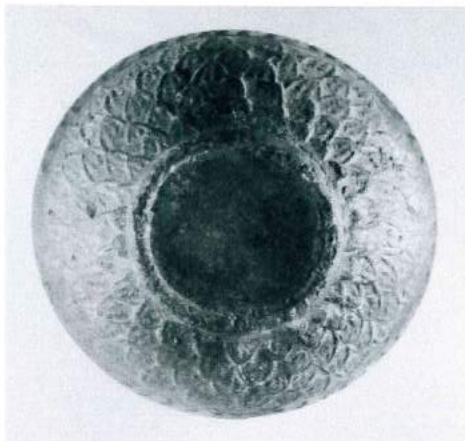


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3

Fig. 2.



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Megarian bowls.  
1-2 Pilsen Museum, from Kerch,  
3-4 Kirbei Workshop, Louvre,  
5 Bojkov collection Sofia, silver.



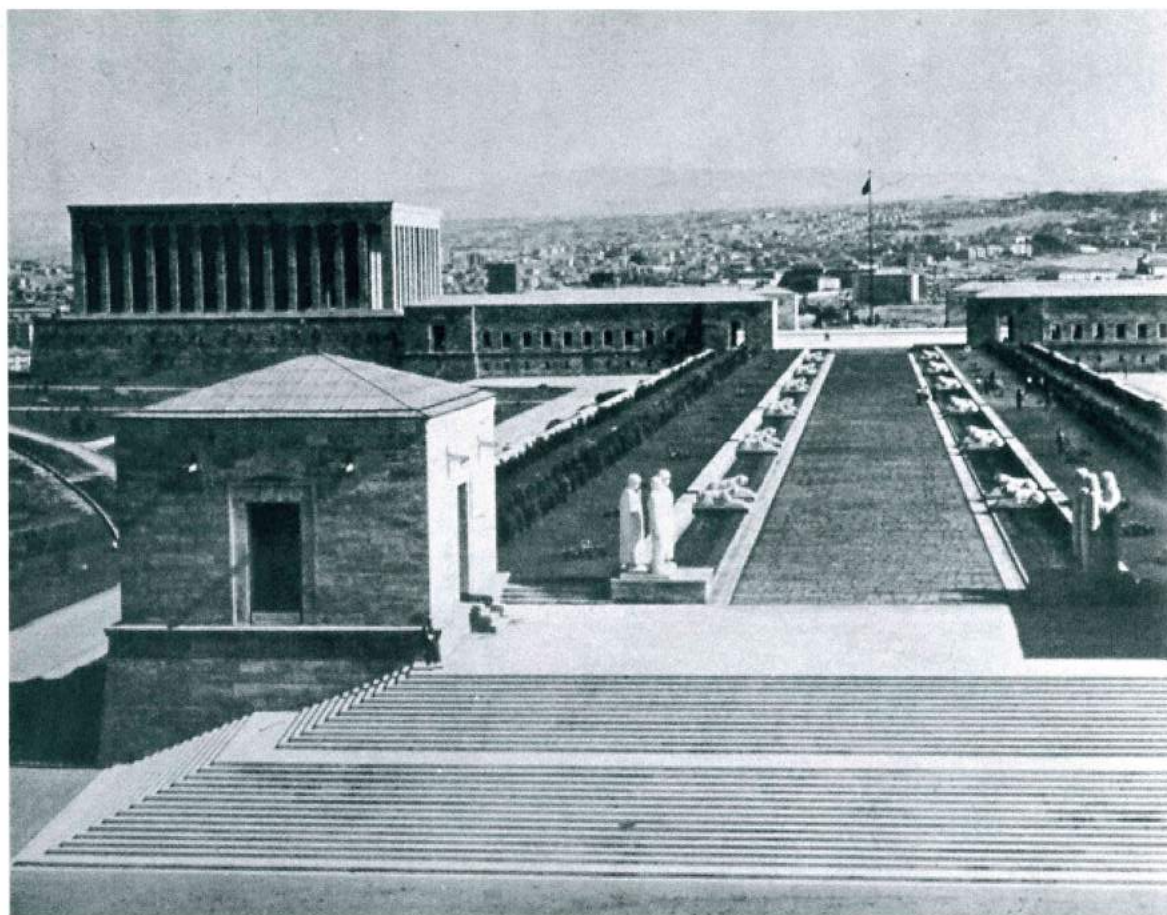


Fig. 1: General view of Mausoleum of Atatürk complex, with entrance steps leading to processional way



Fig. 2: View of statuary group, "Three Faces of Turkish Men"



Fig. 3: View of statuary group, "Three Faces of Turkish Women"