

**(PONTIC) DEMETRIOS:
A LATE HELLENISTIC MANUFACTURER OF MOULDMADE
BOWLS IN GREY WARE**

Abstract

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The subject of this paper is devoted to the pottery manufacturer Pontic Demetrios, whose signature is to be found on the bottom of several Late Hellenistic mouldmade relief bowls of grey ware, the place of manufacture of which seems centred on the Bosporan Kingdom area (Pantikapaion, Myrmekion).

The main focus in the research on Pontic grey ware has been on the early vessels. However, grey ware was continuously produced through Hellenistic and Roman times. My paper will deal with the well known Bosporan Mouldmade bowls (MMB) signed by Pontic Demetrios, in the following just called Demetrios.¹ His workshop was one of the few Black Sea workshops producing MMB that we are relatively well informed of. Our knowledge derives foremost from the Russian excavations in Pantikapaion in the 1930s-1950s and the Polish-Russian excavations in Myrmekion in the same years that brought the Demetrios workshop into light.

A fair number of inscribed vessels have been unearthed, primarily in the Bosporan cities. His production is very characteristic and it is therefore unproblematic to ascribe even unsigned fragments, especially after personal inspection. To date, five mould fragments have been found, four in Pantikapaion and one in the “suburb” of the Bosporan capital, Myrmekion. They demonstrate the same decorative motives as the signed bowls, so — though not preserving the

¹ Also in Argos a mould-maker was signing Demetrios (Siebert 1978). This has caused some confusion, because Siebert was of the opinion that some of the certainly Pontic vessels signed DEMETRIOU under the base (pl. 21, a) Metropolitan Mus. inv. 98.8.26; b) Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery inv. 48.129) belonged to the same workshop as his Argive workshop of Demetrios-Iason. But in contrast to the Pontic Demetrios, the Argive one signed very neatly on the side of the bowl, not under the base.

signature — there is no reason not to accept the ascription to his workshop of these fragments. But even illustrated pieces, providing they preserve a significant part of the decoration, can be credited his production.

PLACE OF MANUFACTURE

As mentioned, moulds of Demetrios' production have been unearthed in Pantikapaion and in Myrmekion. In Phanagoreia, a Bosporan city in the Asiatic part of the Bosporan Kingdom, a mould fragment with a debased pine cone pattern has also been found.² It is attractive to associate this fragment with the workshop of Demetrios, because of the — allegedly rare — presence of this pattern in his production also. It is to be noted that even though moulds have been found in several places, and even though the fabric shows some variation, based on macroscopic observation it is not possible to distinguish separate production places, because the different variations of fabric can be found in all the types of decoration, and even the fragments with uncommon decoration such as the pine cone, not connected with an inscribed base are made of exactly the same fabric as the inscribed pieces.

FABRIC

The fabric used in the workshop of Demetrios is medium fine with inclusions of lime. Furthermore, many show inclusions of shells and frequently also only partially burnt out organic material is found. The vessels are relatively hard fired and normally fired through, though the walls are relatively thick, 0.25-0.45 cm. A dull grey surface resembling silver was intended, so the bowls were almost exclusively fired steel grey in the hues 3/1, 4/1, 5/1 and 6/1 of the colours 7.5YR, 10YR, 2.5Y, 5Y, Gley 1 3-6/N and 10Y. A few pieces are oxidized (red) and thus to be regarded as "misfired". In contrast to Mediterranean MMB — but similarly to the Central Italian so-called Italo-Megarian vases — the Demetrios production was always left uncoated.

SHAPE

In Demetrios' workshop were produced exclusively relatively deep bowls with a plain straight or more commonly slightly inturned rim. The shape corresponds to that of the early Ephesian workshops, especially of Menemachos, and the height of the rim being mainly between 1.8 and 2.4 cm is similar to the Ephesian grey ware vessels (1.8-2.3 cm), and thus much taller than the later oxidized Ephesian bowls having a rim height mainly between 1.4 and 1.8 cm. The rim diameter is quite small, normally 11-12 cm. In contrast to this, the base diameter is generally quite large, between 4 and 6 cm (mostly between 4.5 and 5.5 cm). The bases normally have a small, low ring foot and the under side of the base is either flat or slightly concave.

DECORATION AND RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY

The decoration of the Demetrios bowls is simple affair. It is almost without exception based on the long-petal motive, and it almost exclusively employs a

² KOVALENKO 1996, 55; mentioned, not illustrated.

single Ionian kyma as rim pattern. The first scholar to propose a typology was I.G. Šurgaja, who divided the Demetrios bowls into five different types of decoration (1962, 117): 1) various types of long-petal decoration, 2) long-petal decoration alternating with slender ovoid petals, 3) various types of decoration with acanthus leaves, 4) imbricate, and 5) pine cone decoration. Kovalenko has provided an overview over the stamps used by Demetrios (1996) and added rosettes on stems (his stamp 17) and birds (his stamp 19). He also mentions the presence of pendent semi-circle motive (his stamp 20). However, I have not seen this represented, and he has no reference to an illustration thereof, so I am not completely convinced of its attribution.

It is possible to expand the decoration typology further: The bases come in four variants, two signed and two unsigned. The signature is stamped with bold letters having square *apices*. On one base fragment the signature was incised, not stamped into the mould (M-48-354).

- A) Signed DEMETRIOU around a double, eight-petalled rosette
- B) Signed DEMETRIOU without rosette
- C) Unsigned, with six-petalled double rosette
- D) Unsigned, plain

Occasionally the body decoration, especially the ends of the long-petals continue under the base. This alone attests to a somewhat sloppy finish of the mould and is not considered as decoration.

We may distinguish seven main decorative motives:

- 1) Vegetal with curved acanthus leaves alternating with tall pointed petals.
- 2) Groups of stylised long-petals alternating with tall pointed petals all elements separated by vertical lines of fine dots.
- 3) Plastic long-petals separated by vertical lines of fine dots.
- 4) Stylised long-petals separated by vertical lines of fine dots.
- 5) Stylised long-petals without dots.
- 6) Imbricate with various types of pointed, triangular petals.
- 7) Pine cone.

As already mentioned, the Ionian kyma is almost exclusively employed as rim pattern, but we do find a few experiments with other types of rim pattern, such as vertical combing or a frieze of eight-petalled rosettes in addition to the slightly more frequent bowls without a rim pattern.

The decorative schemes were not equally popular. Most common was decoration 2 with 41 specimens. Decoration 1 is probably the earliest type of decoration. It is the only one employing a figural element, a bird, probably a duck, turning its head backwards, and it mostly depicts a naturalistic acanthus leaf. This decoration also reveals the main source of inspiration for the vessels, namely the Aeolian region, where we find not only the bird turning its head backwards, but also grey fabric vessels. Decoration 1 vessels occur in a total of 31 vessels. The purely long-petal decoration 3 (plastic), 4 (stylized) and 5 (stylized without dots) are less common than the above-mentioned, and they probably indicate a later development of the workshop's production. The same must hold true of the imbricate decoration 6, which uses several different stamps. The place of the rare pine cone bowls, decoration 7, in the relative chronological sequence is

unknown, but I suspect that they also belong in the latter part of the Demetrios production.

The proposed relative chronology seems to be supported by the use of the base stamps. With exception of one vessel with decoration 3 of plastic long-petals, Base A and B only occur with decoration 1-2. Base 3 is very rare, and it occurs with decoration 1 and 4. Base D, the flat, plain, unsigned base is met with all decoration schemes.

ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY

Kovalenko is the first author that has suggested a date more precise date, namely the end of the 2nd to the first quarter of 1st century BC (Kovalenko 1996, 56-57; Kovalenko 1998, 71). I am of the opinion that this date is too late. First of all, as we have seen the source of inspiration is the early Aeolian vessels, and it is not to be overlooked either that the presence of horizontal lines of fine dots surrounding the Ionian kyma of vessels with decoration 1 and 2, probably the earliest types of decoration can very well be inspired by the early Classical Ephesian bowls. Moreover, a fragment of a signed Demetrios bowl has been found in Neapolis in horizon E-D (Zaycev 2004, fig. 91.3) and an unsigned fragment with decoration 2 has been unearthed in a dump in Čaika (Ч-82-70), both well dated by Rhodian amphora stamps to the third quarter of the 2nd century BC (Kovalenko 2007).

DISTRIBUTION

The distribution has been discussed by a number of authors (e.g. Rogl 2001, 139 with references). During my study I have noted more than 150 more or less fragmentary individual bowls, of these 43 signed. It clear that Demetrios bowls foremost circulated in the Bosporan Kingdom.

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