Table Ware from Knidos: The Local Production during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC

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Table ware from Knidos has now been studied for 15 years and the study is still ongoing, since the material is very multifarious and offers a wide range of possibilities for investigations. The long-term research on Knidian fine ware differs in two important methodological aspects from many other pottery studies: it includes the whole repertory of fine pottery, the local production as well as the imported material, and it considers material that is spread over a long distance of time and is not restricted to a certain historical period. This paper summarizes some of the current results of the research, points to still unsolved problems as well as to new questions that arise from the material, and gives an impression of the Knidan fine ware production and its development during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.[1]

Table ware production in Knidos during these centuries is well represented in a number of stratified, homogeneous pottery groups. Each of these assemblages contains at least around 350 pieces of local fine ware; in most cases 600 to 800 sherds or even more have been counted. The groups represent two chronological phases: they either contained vessels produced between the late 3rd century and the third quarter of the 2nd century BC (phase 1) or they consist of material from the late 2nd and early 1st century BC (phase 2). Despite this unexplained chronological gap around 125 BC, the pottery in both phases gives evidence of a continuous development of the local production.

The lion's share of the material is wheel-made pottery without decoration, which comprises 90 % or more of the deposits in both phases and is therefore assumed to dominate local production. Within the Hellenistic material more than 60 types are attested, the majority of which were produced during the whole period in question. The production was mainly concentrated on four shapes (Fig. 1): the well-known Knidian carinated cup, the bowl with rouletting, the plate with thickened lip and the small echinus bowl. They constitute a common standard dining set, which includes two different drinking vessels. The composition of shapes in an exemplary late Hellenistic complex demonstrates the dominant position of these shapes within the production:[2]

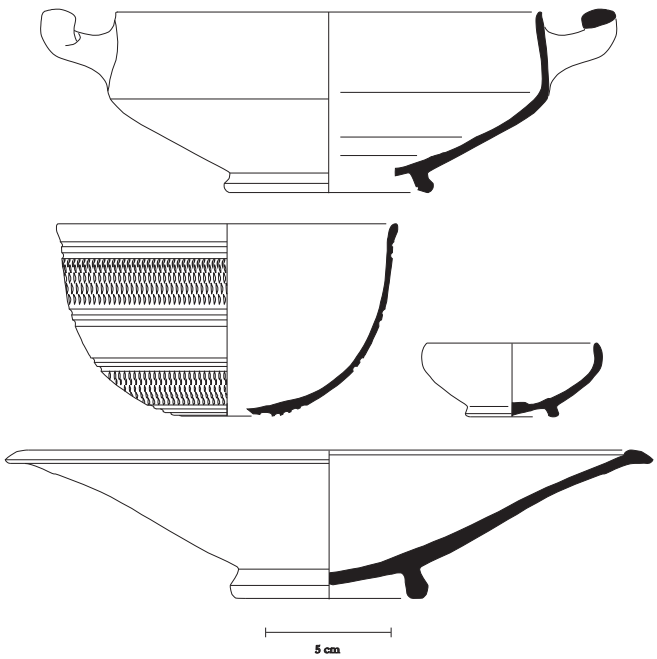


Fig. 1: Knidos. Hellenistic basic dining equipment (ca. 200 – 60 BC)

Type	**Pieces**
Knidian cup	122
Bowl with rouletting	66
Other drinking vessels	14
Plate with thickened lip	147
Other plates	8
Echinus bowl	117
Other small bowls	1
Other open vessels	14

Table 1.

Table 1 also makes clear that these four shapes represented the economic basis of the potter's livelihood. All other shapes were not produced in anywhere near such large numbers but are frequently attested in the pottery assemblages. Within the standard set, the bowl with rouletting and the Knidian carinated cup (Fig. 2) represent inventions of the Knidian potters, both intro-

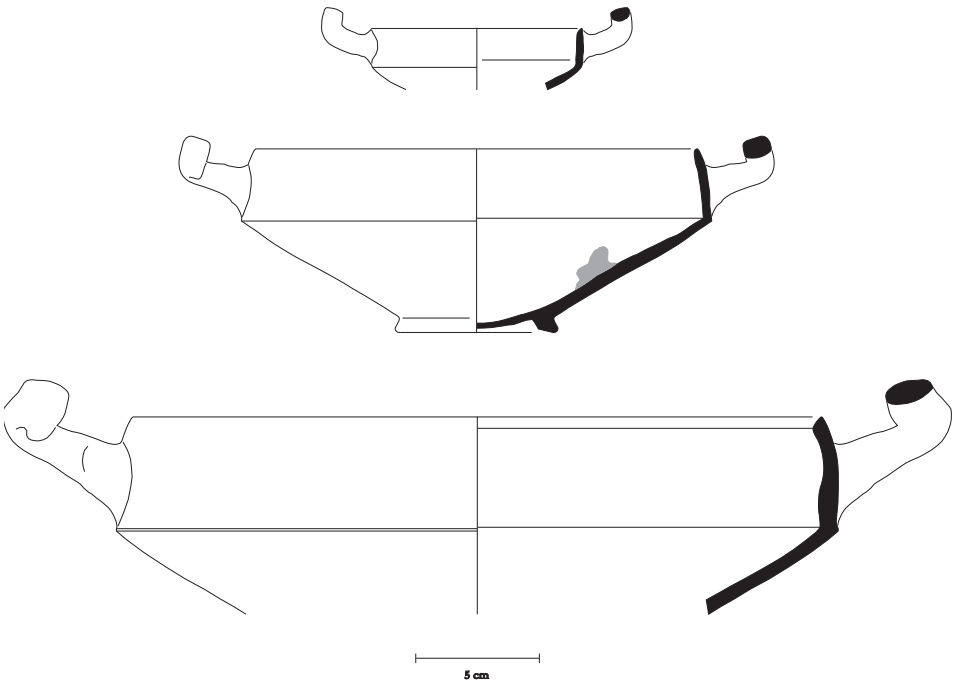
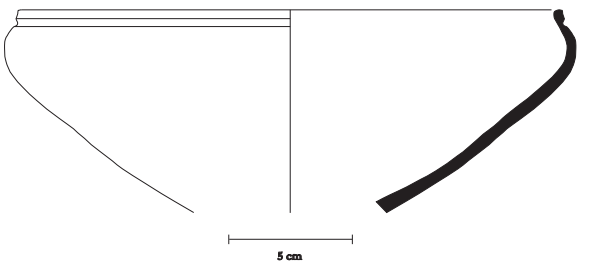


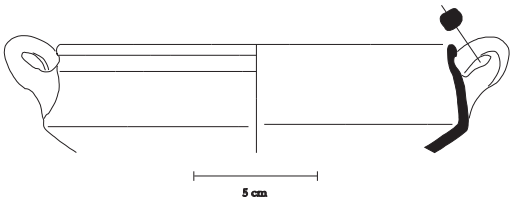
Fig. 2: Knidos. Knidian cups: miniature cup (late Hellenistic), cup of usual size (late Hellenistic) and monumental cup (early Imperial)

duced around 200 BC. The carinated cup is particularly interesting, since this shape of the wide-mouthed drinking cup as descendant of the classical *kylix* celebrates a kind of renaissance in the Hellenistic east. The general preference of wide opened shapes with low rim separates the Knidian drinking and *symposion* culture from that of other Hellenistic centres such as Pergamon where, according to the publications, the skyphos, a more compact shape with high rim, was primarily used.[3] Whether the Knidian cup was also connected with a special ideology or cult, as it is proposed for Pergamene pottery, is still an unsolved question.[4]

The carinated cups also demonstrate best the principal features of Knidian shapes: a conical body, straight or slightly convex walls and a clear contour without interrupting grooves. All parts of the construction are kept as simple as possible and reduced to the necessary minimum. Flourishes of any kind are undesired. An essential element of the Knidian shape is the more or less sharp carination. This feature was of such a central importance that it was also transferred to foreign shapes. The so-called 'Palestinian bowl', for example, was introduced in the Knidian repertory at the latest in the middle of the 2nd century BC and was imitated with all characteristics (Fig. 3a); only the rounded shoulder appears to have contradicted Knidian taste and was replaced quickly by a straight rim above a carination (Fig. 3b).



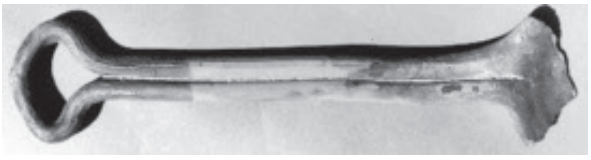
a.



b.

Fig. 3: Knidos. Palestinian bowls: a. Knidian imitation; b. Knidian transformation.

The popularity of the bowls with rouletting and the fact that, with it, two types of drinking vessels seem to belong to the Knidian standard set also raise questions. Concerning this problem, the astonishing high number of ladles within the Hellenistic material seems to be interesting (Fig. 4). The ladle is commonly seen as a measuring instrument. However, the appearance of so many ladles in Knidos in connection with *symposion* vessels indicates that they



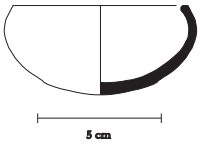


Fig. 4: Knidos. Ladles (2nd – early 1st century BC)

Fig. 5: Knidos. Olpe (2nd – early 1st century BC)

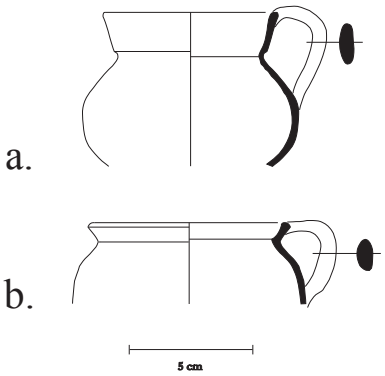


Fig. 6: Knidos. Chronological variants of the Chytridion: a. middle Hellenistic; b. late Hellenistic

might also have had other functions. Significantly, both the ladle and the olpe (Fig. 5), a small jug that is primary distributed in south-western Asia Minor,[5] feature large parts of the body without coating, and the slip, when present, shows the same range in colour on both vessel types. These similarities lead to the conclusion that the two shapes may belong together as a set. Indeed, a Persian seal in Toronto shows a woman carrying the typical Persian wine set: a ladle, a small jug and a bowl.[6] In Knidos such a set could be completed by the bowls with rouletting or the less numerous bowls with concave rim (see Fig. 23a). An ancient Persian tradition had been transferred and carried on within the Knidian drinking culture.

The primary aim of the Knidian fine ware study has been the creation of a chronology and typology of the local shapes. Especially for shapes that were produced in large numbers over a long span of time, it was possible to recognize tendencies within a continuous development. In the case of rare shapes, often only two chronological variants without connecting pieces were attested. For example, the *chytridion* appears in the assemblages of phase 1 with a very high rim, and in late Hellenistic groups with a low rim (Fig. 6). Some variants of one type coexist: the Knidian *lekanis* shows two variants with differently modelled rims, which appear in the same chronological contexts (Fig. 7). Another example is the skyphos with folded handles, which can appear with a rounded or carinated body (Fig. 8).

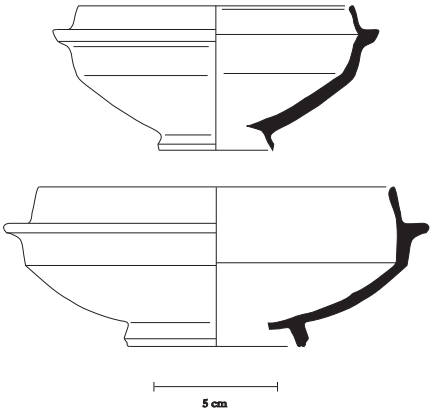


Fig. 7: Knidos. Contemporary variants of the lekanis

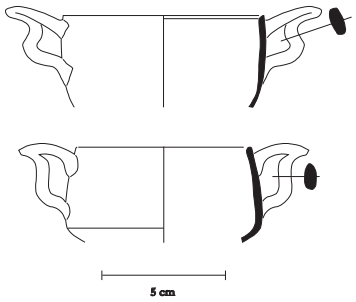


Fig. 8: Knidos. Contemporary variants of the skyphos with folded handles

In light of the masses of undecorated table ware, the production of decorated fine ware cannot be called very intensive. Nevertheless Knidian production included West Slope pottery, vessels with applied reliefs, stamped decoration, and mouldmade ware. Of the standard Hellenistic ceramic repertoire, only white-ground lagynoi were not produced in the local workshop.

The material from the older American excavations in Knidos, on which this study is based, contained around 50 fragments of locally-made vessels with painted decoration. The chronological frame of the West Slope pottery production is difficult to determine, since assemblages from the 3rd century BC and before are missing. Based on typological considerations, the oldest pieces within the Knidian material can be dated early in the second half of the 3rd century; the few examples from this early stage show a clear Attic influence. The latest pieces seem to be two fragments of Knidian cups, which with a slightly in-turned lip and an extended carination show features of early imperial variations of the shape (Fig. 9). This means that the production of West Slope pottery reached late in the 1st century BC. Meanwhile, most

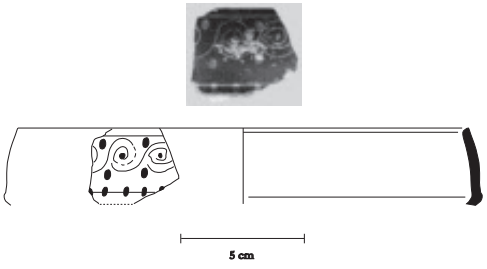


Fig. 9: Knidos. West Slope pottery: Knidian cup with painted and scratched decoration, early Imperial

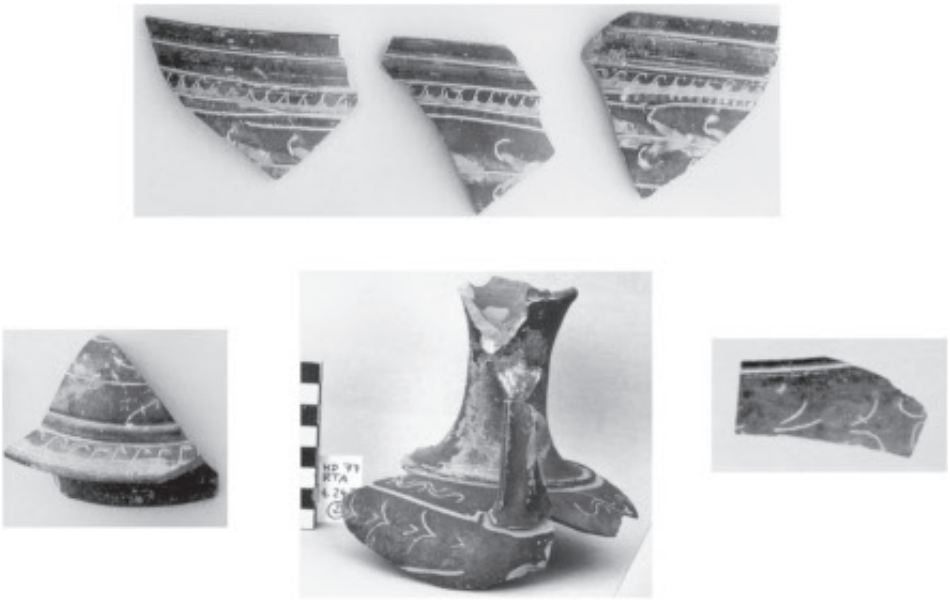


Fig. 10: Knidos. West Slope pottery: local workshop-group

of the preserved, decorated material dates in the 2nd century, on the basis of context or typology. The preserved material includes at least 15 shapes, most of them only represented in one or two examples. More numerous is the kantharos with five pieces, but the most successful shape is the reversible lid, which appears 15 times within the material and is the dominant, if not the only, attested West Slope shape in the late Hellenistic phase. In general, the decoration of the vessels is not very homogeneous. The painting is very colourful, using mainly white, pale orange and reddish brown colours. This feature, but especially the extensive use of double grooves filled with white dots, betrays a certain influence of Pergamene West Slope pottery. Despite the great variety it was possible to identify a workshop-group consisting of four vessels: two kantharoi, the lid of a *pyxis* and an amphora (Fig. 10). Common features are their style and the uniform method of constructing the garlands with a characteristic combination of scratching and painting.

Among the painted pottery found in Knidos also the rims of two large plates appeared, which represent types belonging to a certain group of West Slope ware, recently named "Ivy Platter Group" by S. Rotroff because of their significant decoration (Fig. 11).[7] The two pieces from Knidos clearly show different fabrics: while one (Fig. 11a) is surely an import, the fabric of the other (Fig. 11b) corresponds to that of the local production. Therefore Knidos or at least the southwestern region of Asia Minor should be considered as origin for a part of this group.

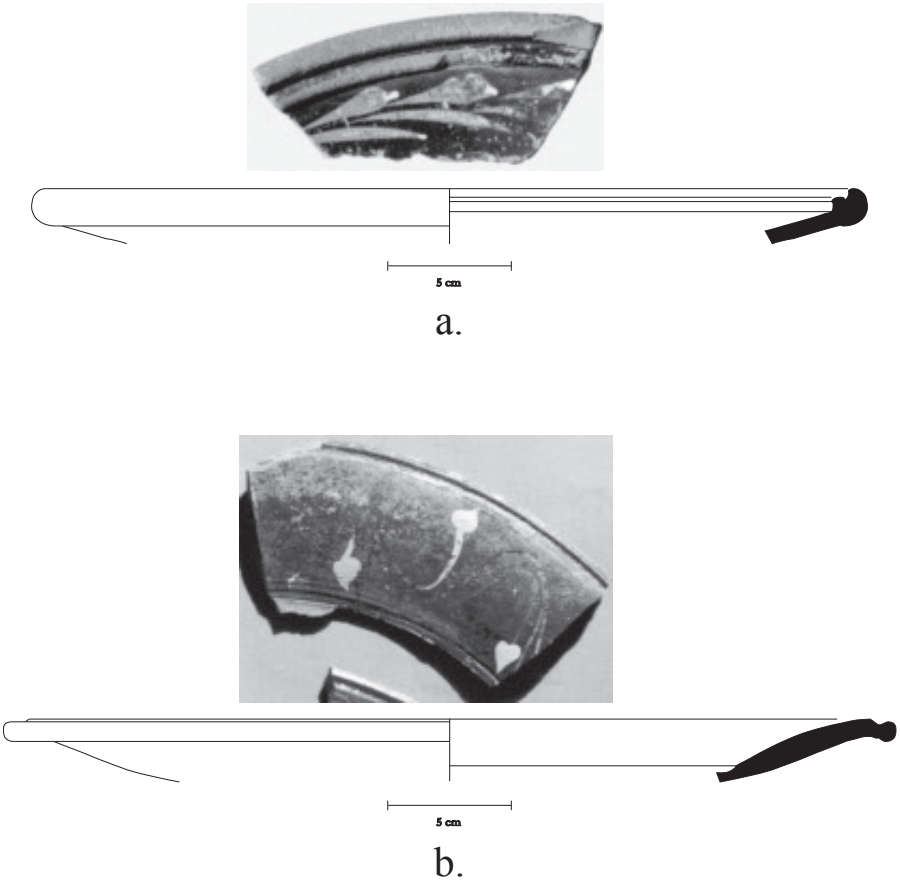


Fig. 11: Knidos. West Slope pottery: Ivy Platter Group; a. import; b. local production

Applied decoration appears only in single examples on table ware during the older Hellenistic phase. The preserved material documents a small production of medallions, which had already started before the middle of the 2nd century.[8] The situation changed rapidly in the last quarter of the 2nd century, when the Knidians discovered the frog and placed it on the inside of their famous cups, near the centre and accompanied by a circle of stamped plants (Fig. 12). Within the material of the older excavations, 32 fragments with applied frogs have been discovered, but with every new excavation more of them appear. This may sound like a mass production of frog-cups, but if we confront the 32 preserved examples with the enormous number of Knidian cups, not even one percent carried such a decoration. Studying each frog in detail ended up with the astonishing result, that they are all individuals; only in two cases was it possible to identify identical frogs.[9] As a conclusion, the

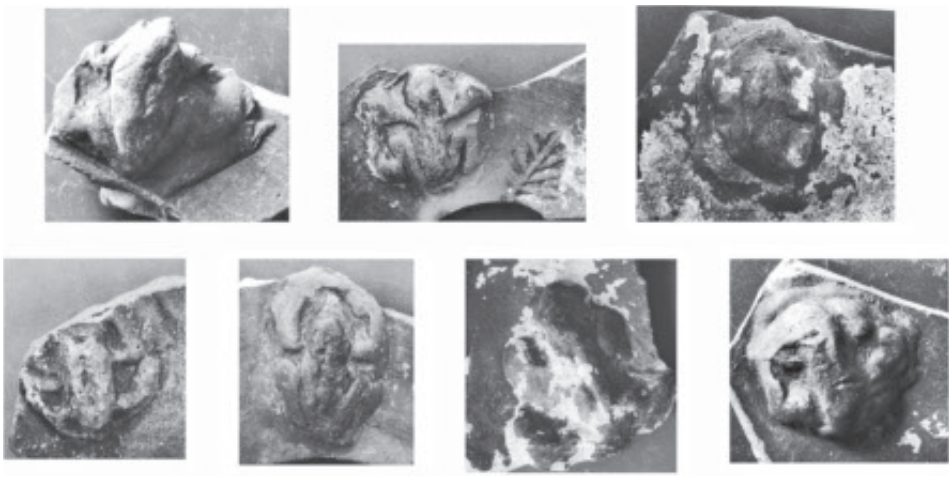


Fig. 12: Knidos. Applied decoration: frogs

number of moulds must have been nearly as high as that of the extant applications. Unfortunately, only one mould has been found thus far, but it has removed the last doubts about their Knidian origin (Fig. 13).

The most common decorations of wheelmade table ware in Knidos are stamps. The scientific literature never paid much attention to this kind of decoration; it has always been regarded as a cheap method to adorn a large number of vessels in the same manner in a relative short time, resulting in monotonous mass production. Concerning the Knidian material, this is surely a mistaken impression. Around 150 fragments with stamped decoration are preserved and show a wide range of motifs and variations. Among this material, only a few pieces show identical stamps, and it becomes clear that diversity here, too, was an important element, more important than an economical serial production. The relatively small number of decorated vessels also points against it. Ninety-six stamped pieces carry palmettes, a motif that is distributed over the whole Mediterranean and not so spectacular. Significant for the Knidian workshop is the lotus, which is preserved on 37 examples

Fig. 13: Knidos. Applied decoration: mold for a frog-application (left) and impression

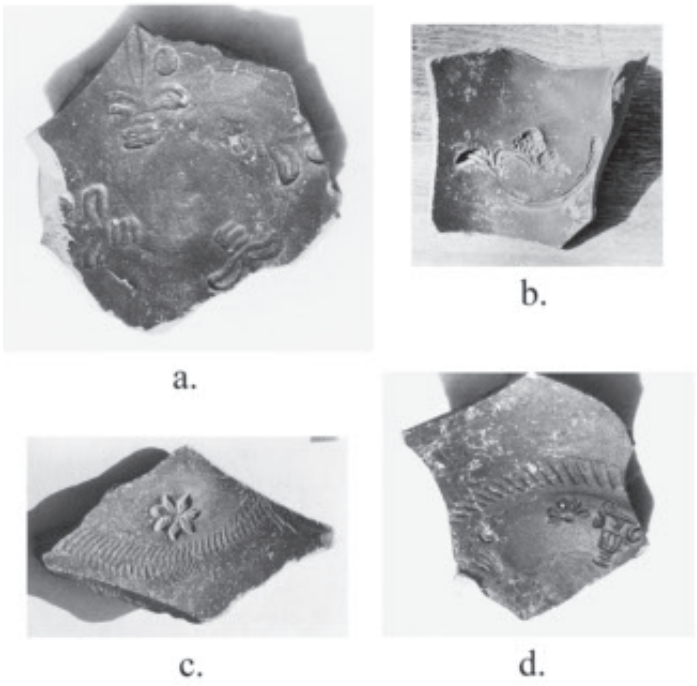


Fig. 14: Knidos. Stamped decoration: a. lotus; b. vine; c. flower; d. flower and vessel

(Fig. 14a). In contrast to the palmette, the lotus only appears on Knidian cups, often together with a frog. Another typical Knidian motif is the vine (Fig. 14b) and a few examples show stamped flowers and vessels (Fig. 14c-d).

Corresponding observations have been made in case of the mouldmade bowls. The production of mouldmade pottery in Knidos is mainly attested by the debris of a potter's workshop in the southern necropolis, where masses of bowl-fragments and sherds of moulds were found. Until now unfortunately only a relatively small part of this material was accessible; it includes 23 moulds and a large (uncounted) number of bowls, as well as some fragments of other types of vessels, especially closed shapes. The preserved pieces are very homogenous considering the style and repertory of the decoration, and give a good impression of the Knidan production. This mouldmade pottery was presented at an earlier conference in Greece, so the presentation here can be restricted to some central observations.[10] All the fragments of bowls and moulds are in some way connected with each other through the stamps and their combination. More than 40 different motifs were used to decorate the 23 moulds, and at least another 40 appear on the walls of the studied bowl fragments. Considering that only a small part of the material was accessible for the study, this attests a very rich repertory of single motifs for the local workshop. The possibilities of combinations are accordingly enormous, and as the material demonstrates, the potters fully exploited these possibilities. Within the whole mass of potsherds, no two are decorated identically. Only two matching

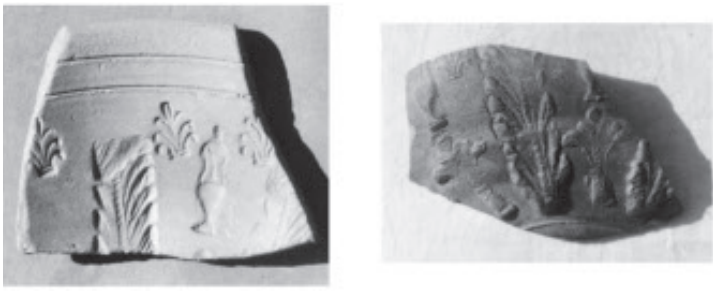


Fig. 15: Knidos: Mouldmade pottery: Matching bowl and mould

pieces have been identified: the fragments of a mould and a bowl, which obviously belong together (Fig. 15). This observation – the lack of identical bowls – produced several questions, firstly concerning the function of the mould, secondly concerning the bowls and their meaning to the customers, and thirdly concerning the potter. It is a common belief, that moulds were created with a single purpose: a fast production of series of identical vessels. And yet, the Knidian mouldmade bowls show no evidence for such a serial production. All the bowls have different decorations – although some look very similar – and therefore they have to be regarded as individual pieces. For the Knidian moulds this diversity of designs means that their one and only purpose was to produce a relief vessel. Also the large number of different stamps is easily understood if the aim of the production was to create a wide range of unique vessels. Furthermore, each bowl is the result of a complex production process and therefore surely was not so cheap. Such difficulties of production might explain the low number of mouldmade bowls within the pottery assemblages. From the modern point of view this does not seem very economical and effective, but we should not forget that the needs of the ancient customers were probably different from ours. For example, concerning the customer's obvious need for individual tableware, we also have to ask whether he had an influence on the decoration of 'his' bowl. The production of unique vessels finally throws a new light on the potter, who is often only regarded an assembly line worker. The constant production of new and different moulds also attests instead to a certain kind of creativity and artistic ability.

Comparing the pottery assemblages of the two phases allows some observations concerning the general development of the Knidian tableware production. First, the production of the four standard types mentioned before increases enormously, both in absolute numbers and in comparison to the other types, in the late Hellenistic phase 2. Second, this increased production goes along with a decline of what is generally defined as 'quality': walls become thicker, the slip becomes thinner, the inclusions become bigger, etc. And, third, the production of decorated fine ware declines significantly in this later phase. The reasons for these changes are not easy to determine since literary sources concerning the history and economy of the city in this period

do not exist and, therefore, the background of this development is unknown. In his study on the so-called *Pergamene Sigillata*, Carsten Meyer-Schlichtmann recognized a similar development:[11] in the beginning of the production, he observed a low number of vessels with a high quality, then the production increased more and more with negative consequences for the quality of the material. He explained this development with a changing social origin of the customers: first the vessels were used only by the upper class, then became more popular, until, in the final, most degenerated stage, they were used by the masses. With this interpretation, he constructs a causal connection between the economical situation of the customers and the quality of tableware. In fact, such a connection, despite its intuitive appeal, has never been studied for the Hellenistic period and there is no real evidence supporting it. The only thing we know for sure is that an increasing production responds to either a perception or a reality of increased demand, but we have no information about the social strata of the consumers unless assemblages can be studied on a household-by-household basis. Regarding this phenomenon from a more objective point of view, at the very least a connection between an increasing production and a loss of quality can be recognized in Pergamon as well as in Knidos. It therefore seems obvious to search for the reasons for the development in the potter's workshop and in the conditions of production: to satisfy the enormous increasing need for the standard shapes, the workshop had to produce more vessels in the same time as before. In consequence, less time can be spent on each step of the production, and this automatically ends up in less intensively prepared clay and less carefully shaped vessels, especially when the limit of the workshop capacity is reached. The declining production of decorated pottery in Knidos gives another hint in this direction. The situation just described forces – as a logical consequence – the workshop to neglect the production of less important pottery and to concentrate on the pottery of greatest economic significance. In Knidos this would be the undecorated wheelmade vessels. The production of decorated pottery, however, was never very intensive and therefore reduced in the late Hellenistic phase.[12]

A further major problem is the development of the Knidian production during the 1st century BC, since pottery assemblages of the later second and the third quarters of that century are still not available. In the Augustan period it seems that the Hellenistic repertory was largely replaced by new shapes. Meanwhile, a detailed study of the material shows that Hellenistic traditions are still present. The technical treatment of the pottery had not really changed; the vessels were still coated in the same technique and in the same colours as their late Hellenistic predecessors. Black-slipped vessels are still common and represent an important part of the early Imperial production. For the Hellenistic period it was possible to attest a close relation between the production of wheelmade and mouldmade pottery by the identification of single stamps that were used in both categories (Fig. 16). This connection is still present in the period after 50 BC, as a vine-stamp (Fig. 14b), which appears on the inside

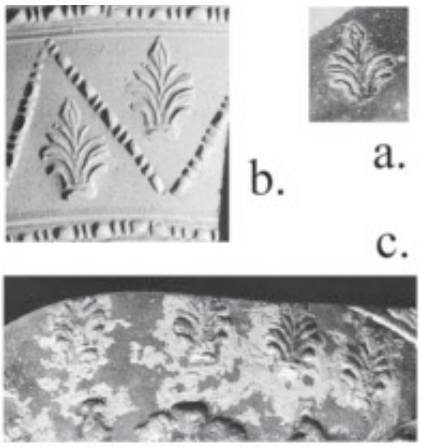


Fig. 16: Knidos. Relations between wheelmade and mouldmade pottery in the late Hellenistic period: a. wheelmade bowl; b. mould; c. mouldmade bowl

Fig. 17: Knidos. Mould for a relief-skyphos

of an open wheelmade shape, also appears on a mould (Fig. 17), which was used to produce relief skyphoi. Thus certain workshop traditions continued into the second half of the 1st century BC.

Furthermore, production is still dominated by four shapes (Fig. 18), including the well-known Knidian cup (the most obvious survivor of the Hellenistic repertory), a small bowl, a plate, and again a second drinking vessel, the skyphos. This indicates in general, that some traditions concerning the drinking and dining habits had not changed much.

Most interesting in this regard is another survivor from the Hellenistic repertory: the abovementioned olpe. This shape had shown no appreciable development during the 2nd and early 1st centuries BC, but now it appears in a strongly changed design (Fig. 19). The Imperial examples have lost the groove on the bottom and have a higher, stretched, and often slimmer body ending in a narrower mouth. The widest diameter of the body is now situated in the lower region of the shape. This lowering of the focal point is not

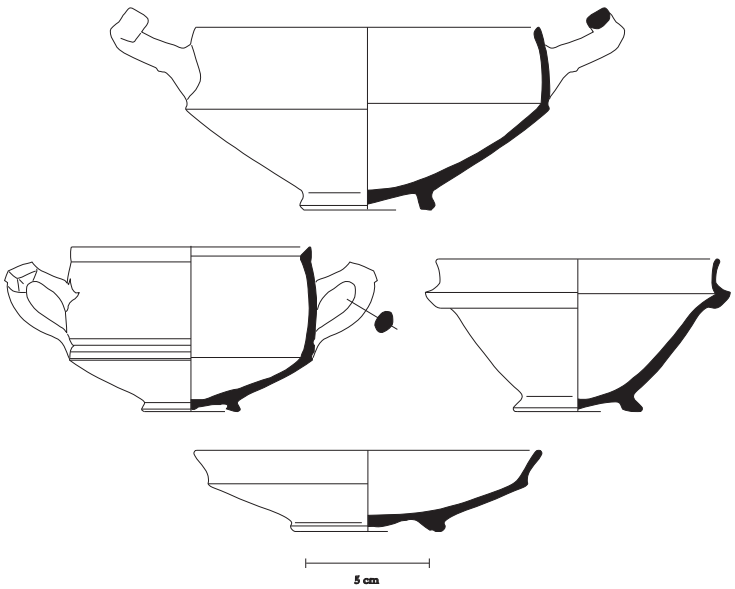


Fig. 18: Knidos. Early Imperial basic dining equipment (ca. 25 BC – 150 AD)

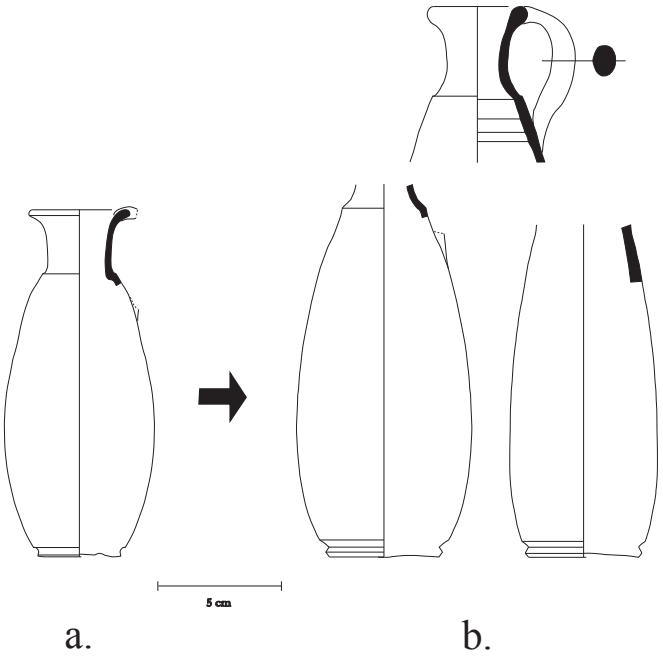


Fig. 19: Knidos. Development of the olpe: a. late Hellenistic phase; b. early Imperial examples

an isolated instance; it continues a tendency that already began in the 4th / 3rd century BC. A 3rd-century olpe has the focal point in the shoulder region.[13] In general, the development of the olpe indicates that other shapes as well may have suffered an extreme transformation at the latest in the third quarter of

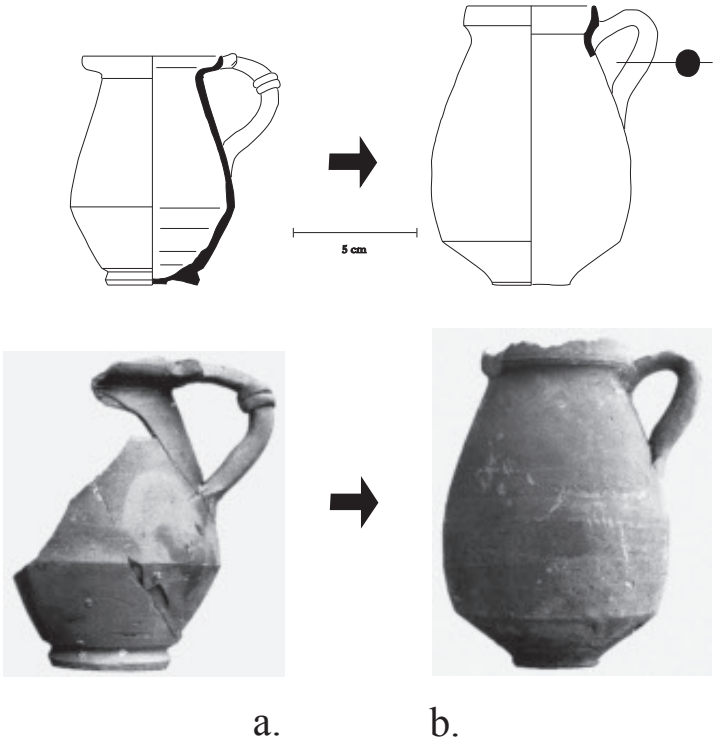


Fig. 20: Knidos. Reconstructed development of the jug with bi-conical body: a. late Hellenistic predecessor; b. early Imperial successor

the 1st century BC. Presupposing that this tendency of shape development is of universal character, further imperial types, such as the bi-conical jug (Fig. 20, compare Hellenistic example 20a with Imperial example 20b), find predecessors within the late Hellenistic repertory.

Another way to identify connections between late Hellenistic and early Imperial types is to concentrate on principal features of each shape. The Imperial standard plate (Fig. 18, below) displays a flat conical body, an out-turned concave rim and a sharp ridge between them. These features are well-known from any Hellenistic bowl or plate nearly everywhere in the Mediterranean. Comparison of the earlier and later shapes shows that the proportions have changed a little and the rim becomes lower (Fig. 21). More difficult is the identification of predecessors for the imperial standard bowl (Fig. 18). Shapes like that are usually connected with shapes of Italian or other *sigillata* types and are simply explained as their imitations, with all chronological consequences. Regarding the development of the Knidian Imperial bowl (Fig. 22), a variant with a high conical body and a vertical, but concave rim, both parts separated from each user by the usual sharp

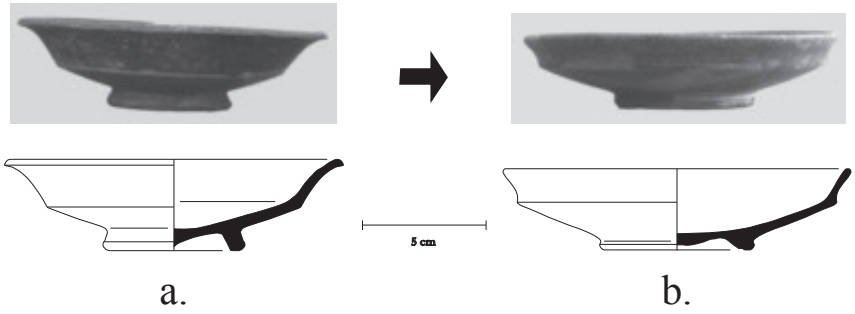


Fig. 21: Knidos. Reconstructed evolution of the plate with outturned rim: a. Hellenistic predecessor; b. early Imperial derivative

ridge, appears at the beginning of the Imperial series (Fig. 22a). The variant is rare and only attested in three black-slipped examples within the early Imperial assemblages. However, the closest parallel to these bowls in Knidos appears in the late Hellenistic groups in a shape with similar features copying a Pergamene prototype (Fig. 23a).[14] Again, between the earlier and later versions, the proportions changed and the rim has been lowered (Fig. 23).

Thus, large parts of the early Imperial repertory can be considered descendant from late Hellenistic forerunners. The development of the local shapes accelerated distinctively in the middle of the 1st century BC. The motivation for this process is unknown, as are the factors of influence. Whether we can solve these problems depends largely on our methods of research: the splitting of the material in chronological groups according to the common epoch-division – as it is usually practiced – would have hidden the connections noted here, and is therefore an impediment to progress when questions of shape development are concerned.

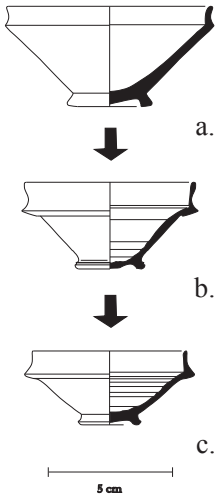


Fig. 22: Knidos. Evolution of the Knidian Imperial bowl: a. late 1st century BC – early 1st century AD; b. Augustan – ca. 75 AD; c. ca. 50 – 150 AD

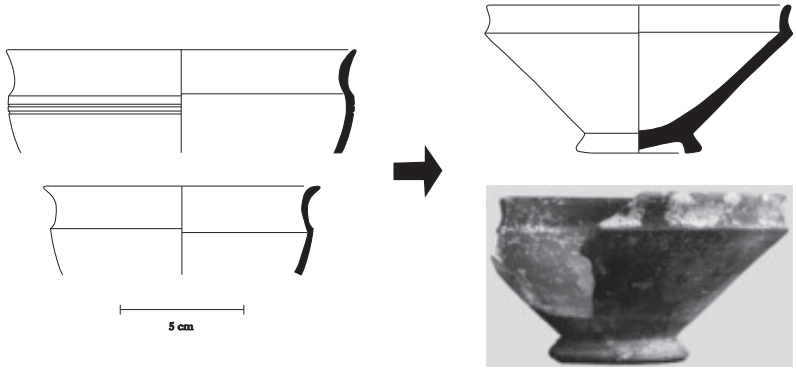


Fig. 23: Knidos. Evolution of the Knidian Imperial bowl: a. late Hellenistic predecessor; b. earliest variant of the Imperial series

Notes

1 Unfortunately, it will not be possible to discuss here all the aspects in detail. For a full discussion, see Kögler 2010. All drawings and photographs here are by the author.
2 Context: KD 76 LRTA t202 (2)-late 2nd-early 1st century BC.
3 For the shapes, see e.g., Meyer-Schlichtmann 1988, 63 S1 pl. 7; 69-70 S8 pl. 8. 29; Behr 1988, 126-137, figs. 7-10.
4 For the Pergamene situation, see Hübner 1993.
5 A large number of olpai are known from graves on Kos and Rhodos, see e.g., Giannikouri et al. 1989, 70-71, pls. 44a, 52b, 58-59.
6 Koch 1992, 248, fig. 177, (see also p. 247, fig. 176).
7 Rotroff 2002, 97-115.
8 For the medallions, see Kögler 2010, 285-286, 588 no. Kn.283-Kn.286, fig. 63, pl. 56.
9 This is of course not easy, since the applications have always been deformed when pressed onto the cups.
10 Kögler 2000, 189-194, pls. 95-98.
11 Meyer-Schlichtmann 1988, 210-211.
12 However, observations, interpretations and conclusions like these are only possible when all parts of the production are included. This is, unfortunately, not the case for Pergamon, where the local sigillata has been studied isolated from the rest of the pottery production. To me this way of looking at things represents a clear methodical mistake. Especially when pottery is concerned, results and interpretations that are based only on sections of a whole have to be questioned.
13 For an example, see Kögler 2010, 572 no. Kn.118 fig. 58, pl. 50; for the development Kögler 2010, 202-204).
14 For the prototype, see Meyer-Schlichtmann 1988, 111-112, shape N37, pl. 13.