

A Pontic Group of Hellenistic Mouldmade Bowls

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This article presents a specific group of mouldmade bowls with characteristic fabric, shape and decoration.¹ The finds are not numerous and, for the most part, they are preserved as fragments. Isolated examples have been published, but they were never considered as a group. The excavations on the north shore of the Old Town of Nesebar (ancient Mesambria), where these vessels predominate among the rest of the mouldmade bowls, enabled us to distinguish the group and provided new data for its study.²

Technology

The texture of the clay is fine and hard, occasionally with traces of mica. The colour is grey, usually darker (almost black) on the lower part of the vessel (Gley 1 3/N, Gley 1 4/N, Gley 1 5/N, 5Y 2.5/1, 5Y 3/1). The rims tend to have a light grey streak towards exterior (5Y 4/1, 5Y 5/1, 5Y 6/1, 2.5Y 6/1). The bowls are covered with glaze – thick and well-adhering inside the bowl and on the rim, and thinner on the body. On some examples the glaze drips towards the bottom and the surface is not uniformly covered. The decorated zones in particular are unevenly glazed and show a matte finish. The glaze inside is lustrous, generally black (Gley 1 2.5/N, Gley 1 3/N, 5YR 2.5/1), with some variation of colour on the border between rim and body (10YR 5/4). The outer surface is dark grey or black on the walls (Gley 1 3/N, Gley 1 4/N, 5Y 2.5/1, 5Y 3/1, 10YR 3/1) and mottled brown or brownish grey (5Y 5/1, 5Y 4/1, 2.5Y 3/1, 2.5Y 4/1, 2.5Y 5/1) upwards. Only a few bowls are entirely grey-glazed (Gley 1 4/N, Gley 1 5/N, Gley 1 5/10N, 2.5Y 5/1).

The quality of the workmanship of the decoration varies. It is fine on some vessels, but others were made in moulds with carelessly impressed motifs resulting in characteristic double outlines of the decoration on finished products (Figs. 9.5; 10.1 and 4; 11.1).

Shape

The bowls have a quite uniform shape, resembling some metal bowls and phialai.³ Their rims are high (1.2-1.9 cm), abruptly outturned and clearly distinct from the body. The lip is usually pointed or, more rarely, straight

(Figs. 4.2; 5.4). The diameters vary between 11.6 and 14 cm. The widest part of the body is some millimeters smaller. The bodies are either hemispherical (Figs. 5.2; 6.3) or more flattened (Figs. 1.1; 4.1). As could be judged from the entirely preserved or restorable bowls, the height is ca. 6.5-7.5 cm. A ridge surrounding the medallion serves as the base of the vessel (2.4-3 cm diameter).

Decoration

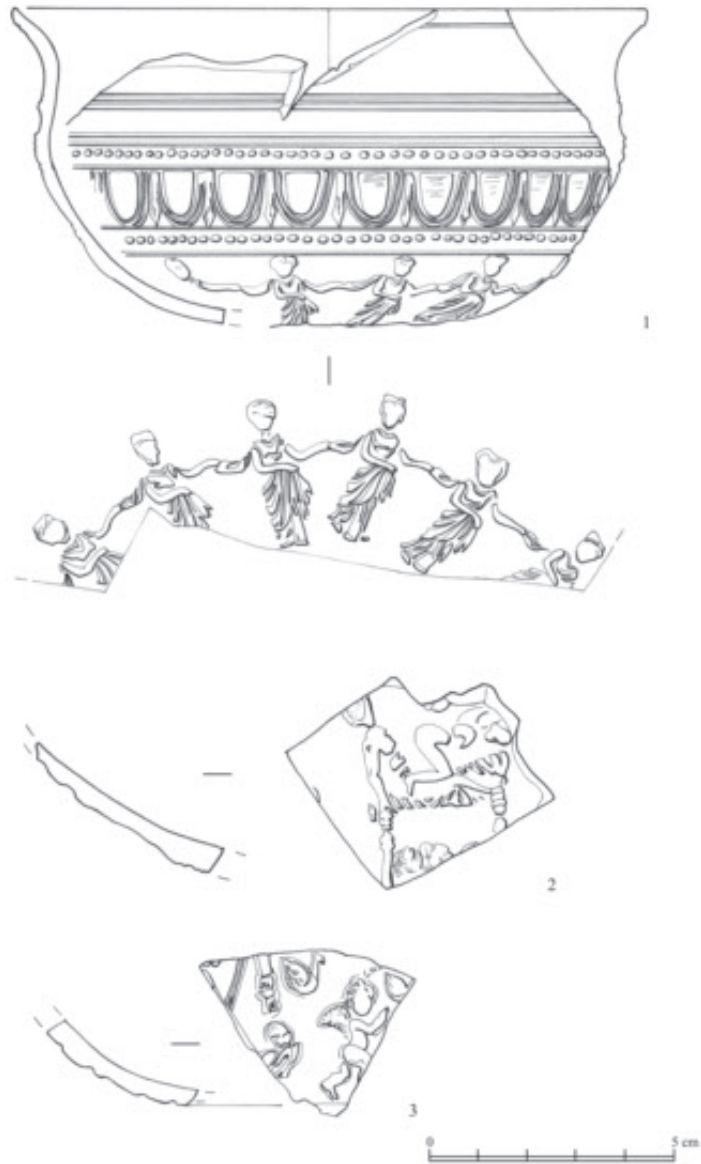
The decoration, as is typical for the Hellenistic mouldmade bowls, is organized in several zones. A number of common elements, concentrated in the rim zone, are attested. Characteristic for the entire group is the groove below the lip, as well as the grooves on the border between rim and body. This border is usually decorated with a row of beads, exceptionally a row of circles (Figs. 6.1; 11.5), bordered by two ridges. On some bowls such decoration was carelessly made or rather imitated after the joining of the rim with the mouldmade body and is hard to distinguish (Figs. 9.5; 11.1; 12.5; 13.1; 15.1). Additional rows of relief were stamped on the bowls: tendrils (Fig. 6.2-3; 12.1), lesbian leaf (Fig. 15.2) and egg-and-darts (Figs. 1.1; 4.1; 9.1; 10.5), the latter surrounded by two rows of beads. The eggs are outlined with two lines, while the same tendrils are used also on the wall decoration (Figs. 6.1; 11.5).

The fragmentary state and limited number of the finds makes it difficult to offer generalizations about the wall decoration. Two main principles of spatial distribution of the motifs are used: 1) one single zone (mainly calyx) or 2) two or more rows of motifs (one of them could be calyx), sometimes divided by a ridge (Figs. 3.3; 10.4; 15.4). Judging from the known examples, the figured, vegetal and long-petal bowls were preferred.⁴ Human figures, for example dancing maidens, appear either independently (Figs. 1.1; 9.1) or combined with plants, birds and various objects. Figured compositions, such as erotic scenes, can also be seen (Figs. 1.2; 9.2). The most popular figure is that of a little Eros, represented advancing to the right with lifted right leg and arm (Figs. 1.3; 2.1-3; 9.3-4; 10.1-2).

The decoration also includes figures of animals – usually birds and, in some isolated cases, lions or dolphins (Figs. 3.1; 9.5). The birds tend to appear on the bowls with Erotes and vegetal decoration, especially the vine tendrils (Figs. 4.2-3; 10.4; 11.1).

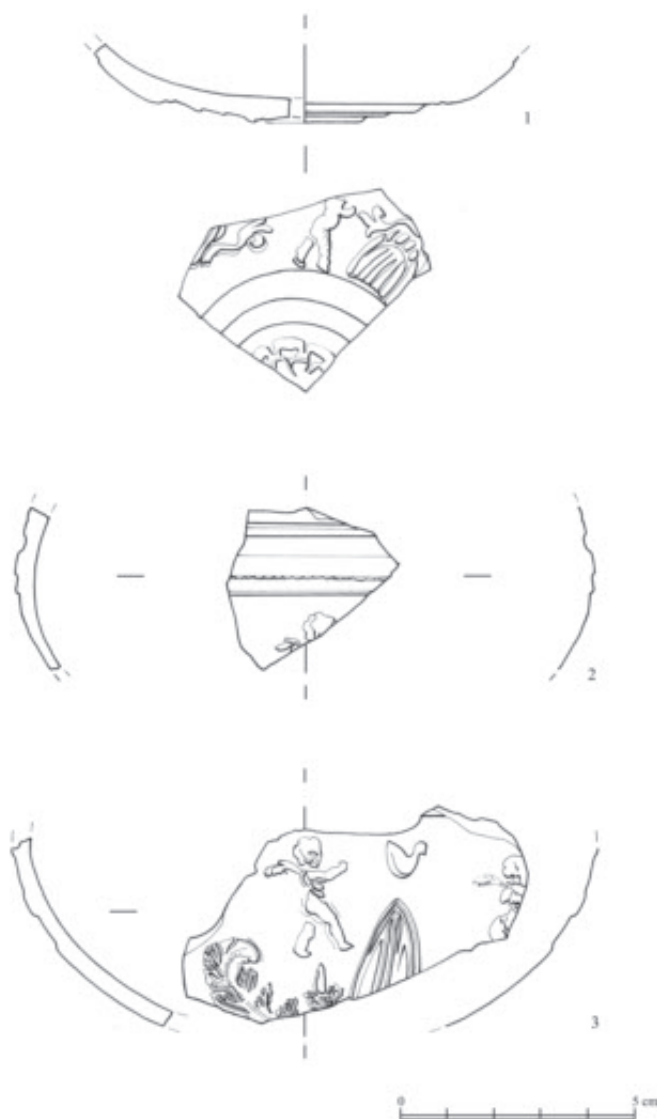
Vegetal motifs, such as trefoil ivy garland (Figs. 4.1; 10.5), hanging garlands (Figs. 3.2; 10.3), flowers and different kinds of palmettes (Figs. 3.3; 7.2; 10.4; 13.2; 14), decorate some of the walls. The palmettes represented on the lower row on Fig. 3.3 have distinctive heart-shaped bases, which can also be seen on a fragment from Ahtopol.⁵ Possibly similar, but more simplified are the palmettes creating the tendrils on the bowl from Tomis (Fig. 14). It seems that there are two favorite patterns – ivy (Fig. 4.5; 10.8; 11.3; 15.3-4) and vine tendrils (Figs. 4.2-3; 5.1; 10.6; 11.1; 12.4; 15.4), and these two are sometimes

Fig. 1. Fragments
from Mesambria,
North Shore (1, 3),
and from Apollonia
UPI II, sect. 28 (2).



combined in a single motif (Fig. 4.4; 8.6-7; 10.7).⁶ The vines are supplemented by flying birds and flowers (sometimes enclosed).

Long petals are often used as independent decoration or combined with acanthus leaves (Figs. 6.1; 8.1, 5; 11.5; 12.6) and tendrils (Figs. 6.1; 14) or vine motifs (Figs. 5.1; 12.4). It should be noticed the great variety of the petals, which are convex or concave and outlined with one or two lines. On one particular bowl from Tomis, they even create a leaf, formed by two lateral petals and one partially stamped between them (Fig. 14).

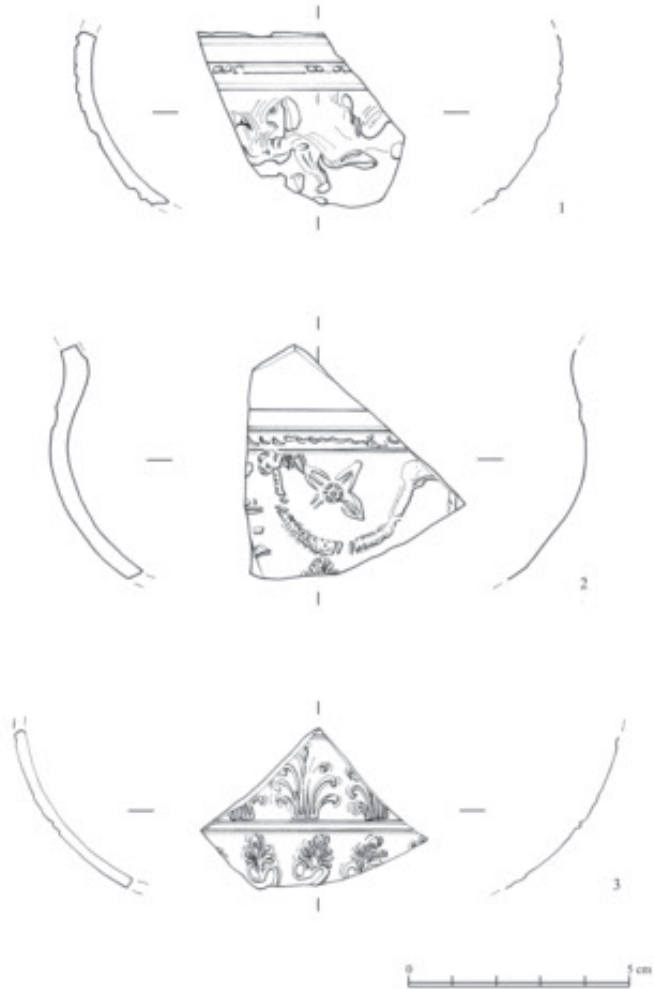


*Fig. 2. Fragments
from Mesambria,
North shore*

The calyx covers the entire wall or is limited to the lower part of the body. The common leaf is acanthus alternating with flowers (Figs. 2.3; 10.2), nelumbo (Figs. 8.5; 13.1)⁷ and lotus petals (Figs. 2.3; 10.2), although some of them appear independently (Figs. 8.2; 11.2). Small calyxes can also be composed by palmettes (Figs. 7.2; 13.2) and small ferns (Fig. 13.1).

All preserved medallions are decorated with rosettes. Two kinds of rosettes are stamped: ten-petalled triple rosette and twelve- or fourteen-petalled rosette of alternating rounded and pointed petals. They are surrounded by one or two ridges.

Fig. 3. Fragments
from Mesambria,
North Shore (1, 3),
and from Apollonia
UPI 55 (2).



A direct influence on the shape or decoration of the presented vessels from other manufacturing centres is difficult to recognize. Instead, particular characteristics find their best parallels in the products of various different areas. The shape resembles some bowls made in the Argive workshops of Monogram and Kleagoras, as well as of some examples from Gortys in Arcadia.⁸ The beads, including the combination with double outlined eggs on eggs-and-darts motif, are common for the workshop of Demetrios-Iason from Argos.⁹ The grooves on the rim are often used by Eastern producers, such as Antiocheia¹⁰ and Tarsos.¹¹ In Antiocheia egg-and-darts between rows of beads are also popular. Ivy tendrils close to some of the presented examples could be seen on mouldmade bowls from Pergamon,¹² Miletos¹³ and Tarsos.¹⁴ The Erotes advancing to the right with lifted right arm and leg are known

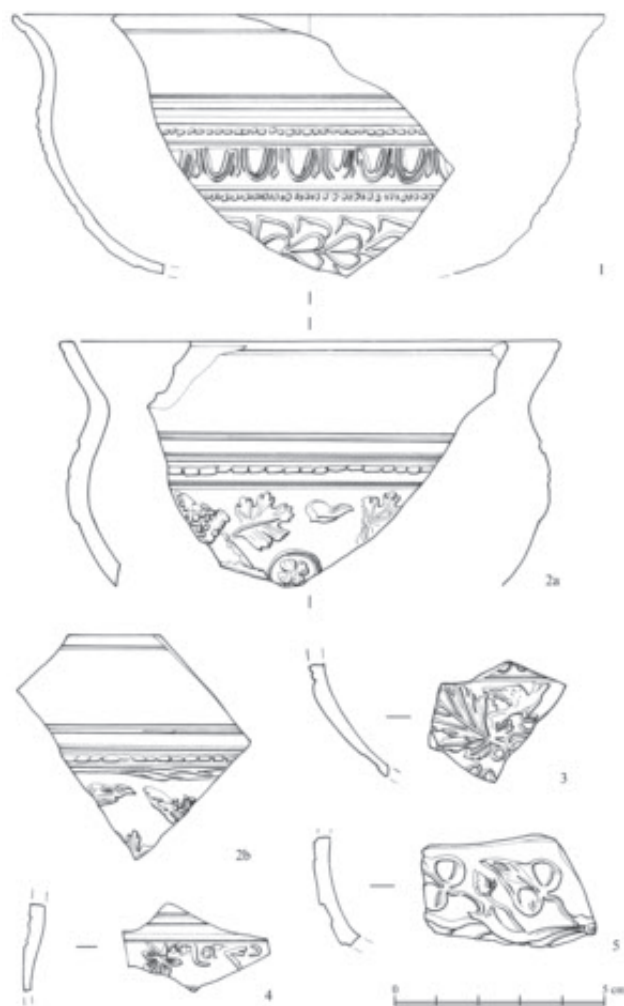
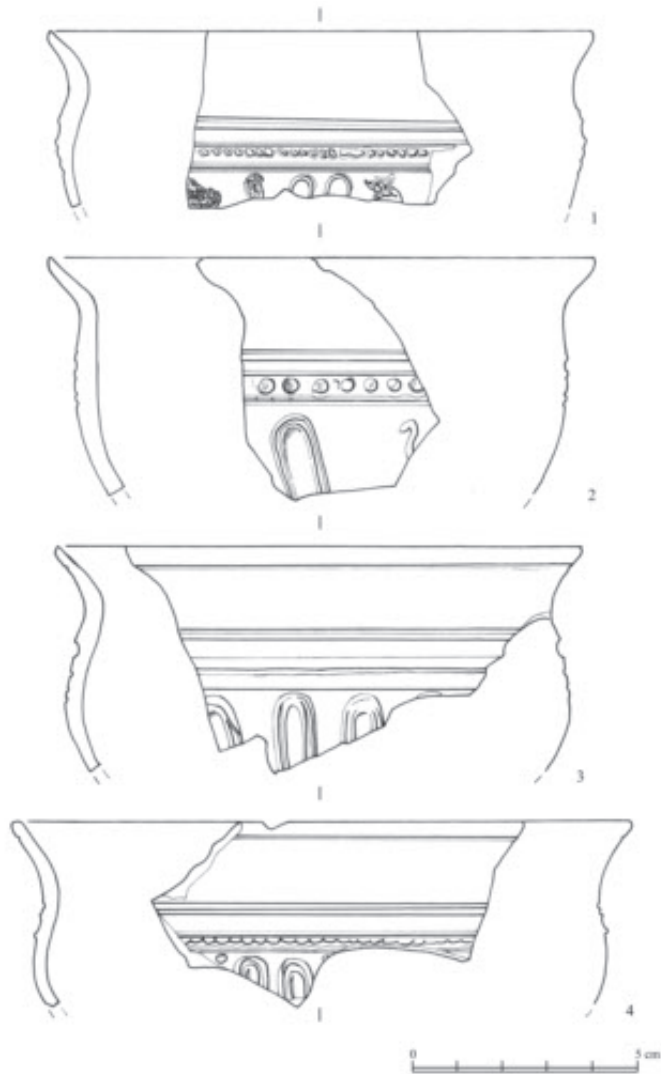


Fig. 4. Fragments from Mesambria, North Shore (1-3, 5), and from Apollonia UPI 226 (4).

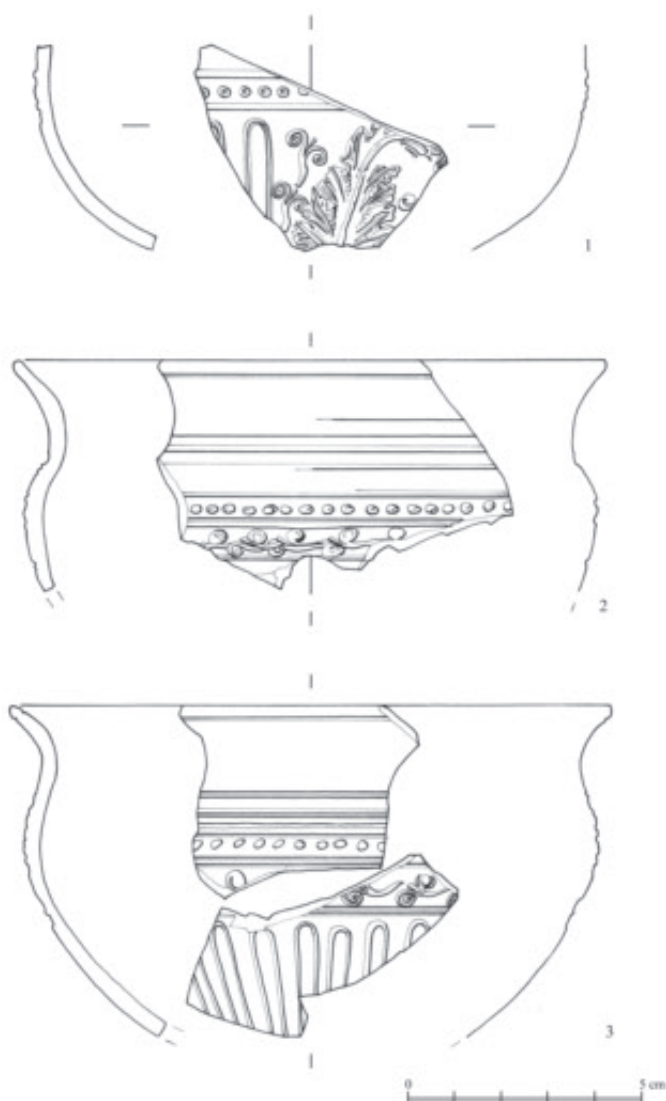
from Miletos,¹⁵ Pergamon,¹⁶ as well as from other Pontic sites.¹⁷ The shape of the ivy leaves on Fig. 10.8 resembles those represented on vessels from Ah-topol,¹⁸ Histria,¹⁹ Libiknehtovka village near Kerč²⁰ and Beljaus,²¹ as well as on the trefoil motifs on mouldmade bowls from Ephesos²² and the so-called Applikenkeramik.²³ The medallion of rosette with alternating rounded and pointed petals is typical for some Ephesian workshops.²⁴ The same triple rosette, but decorating the bottoms of bowls of different fabric, is limited to the Pontic deposits.²⁵ It is used in a simplified variant on the wall and bottom decoration of some vessels from Athens,²⁶ Pergamon²⁷ and Ephesos.²⁸

*Fig. 5. Fragments
from Mesambria,
North shore*



Distribution

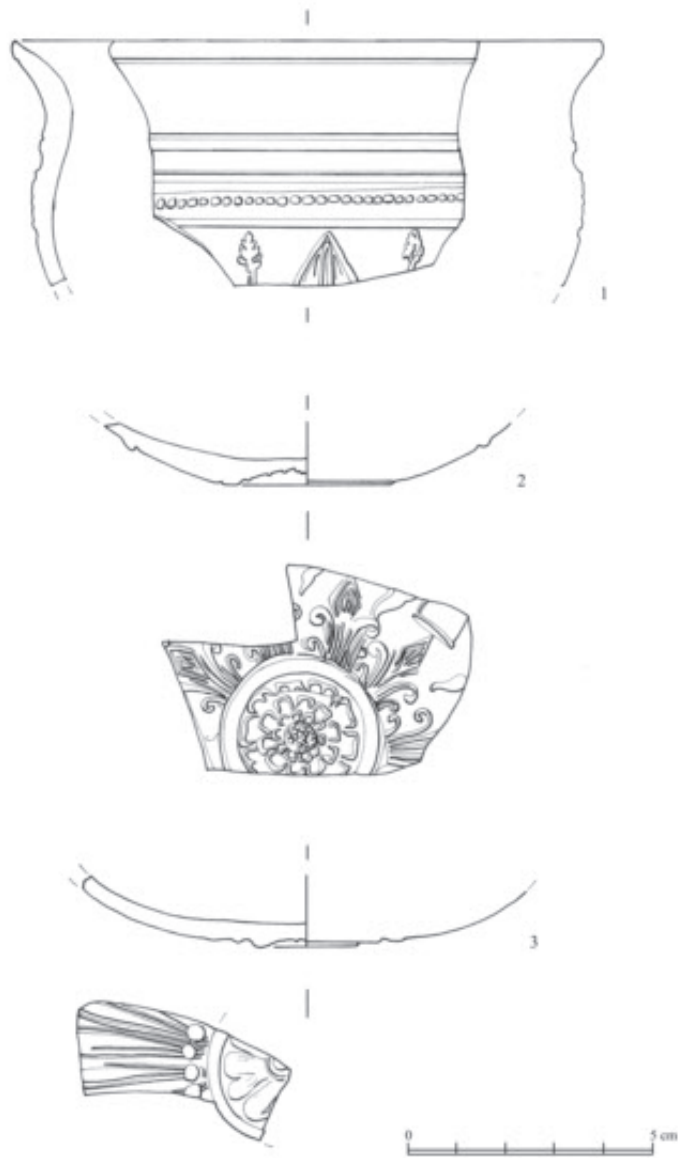
The find spots of the mouldmade bowls presented here are concentrated in the Pontic area, in particular in the western and northern part (Fig. 16). Most of them come from Mesambria, where they constitute 18% of all known mouldmade bowls stored in the Archaeological Museum-Nesebar. The majority is preserved in fragments and found throughout the city, but unfortunately displaced from their initial deposition (into Late Roman and Medieval contexts). Some vessels in a better state of preservation have been discovered



*Fig. 6. Fragments
from Mesambria,
North shore*

in the cemetery.²⁹ Several sherds are found in Apollonia in Late Hellenistic buildings,³⁰ as well as in a stratum with late Hellenistic material (roof tiles and vessels).³¹ At least two or three pieces are known from Ahtopol.³² Several fragments (three illustrated) are mentioned from 2nd century BC layer in Pantikapaion (c. 3 % of all finds of mouldmade bowls).³³ Some examples are found at the Olbian agora and cemetery,³⁴ as well as in the midden covering buildings from 3rd-2nd century BC in Area I in Myrmekion.³⁵ Fragments are published from the Čajka fortress in North-Western Crimea³⁶ and from the

*Fig. 7. Fragments
from Mesambria,
North shore*



Zakuban area.³⁷ Single finds are known from the cemeteries of Odessos³⁸ and Tomis.³⁹ The only examples discovered in a region outside the Pontic area, known to me, are a number of sherds from Daskyleion, which are published with drawings only, but their shape and fabric suggest that they belong to the presented group.⁴⁰

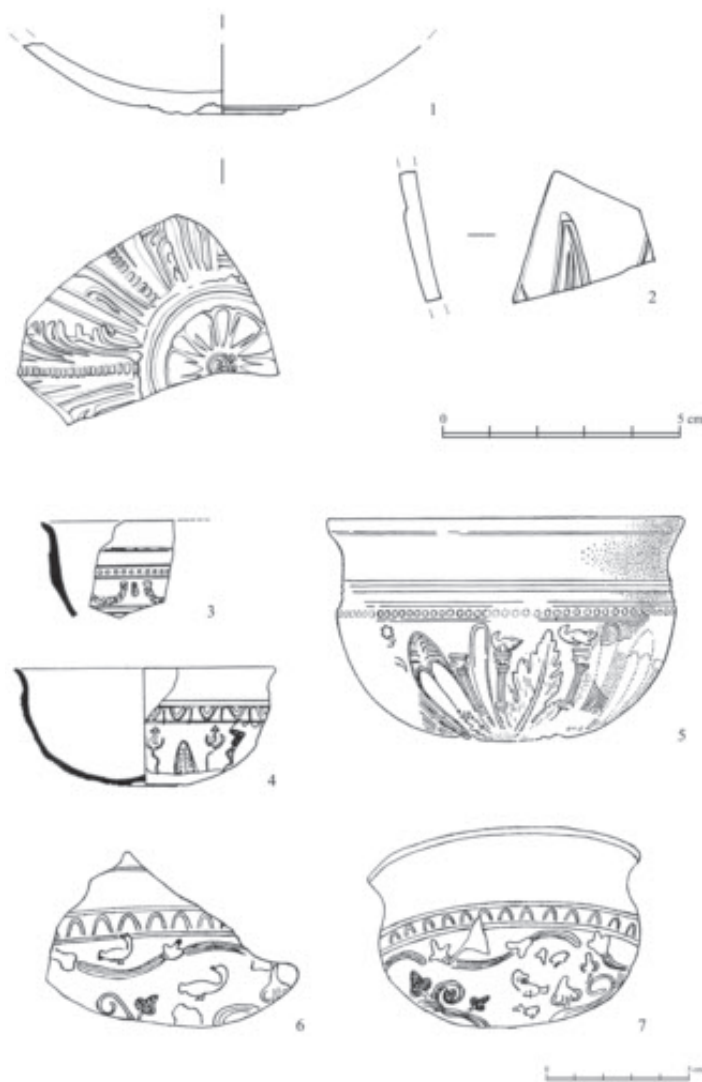


Fig. 8. Fragments from 1-2) Mesambria, North shore; 3-4) Daskyleion (after Derenoylu 2003, pl. XLII KA10, KA 19; no scale); 5) Myrmekion (after Gajdukevič 1958, fig. 64.1); 6) Čajka (after Kovalenko 1987, fig. II.2); 7) Čajka (after Kovalenko 1987, fig. II.1).

Date

The published bowls from grave 56/1901 at Olbia and the Pantikapean stratum are dated in the 2nd century BC.⁴¹ Possibly a little later, in the 2nd-1st century BC is grave II/1962 from Tomis.⁴² According to R. Ocheșeanu, the schematic decoration of the mouldmade bowl suggests a date at the beginning of the 1st century BC.⁴³ A similar date (the last quarter of the 2nd-the beginning of the 1st century BC) is proposed for the fragments from Čajka.⁴⁴ The vessel from the cemetery of Mesambria is found outside a grave, but together with a Late Hellenistic kantharos from the same period.⁴⁵ The deposit of debris over the



Fig. 9. Fragments from Mesambria, North Shore (1, 3-5), and from Apollonia UPI II, sect. 28 (2).

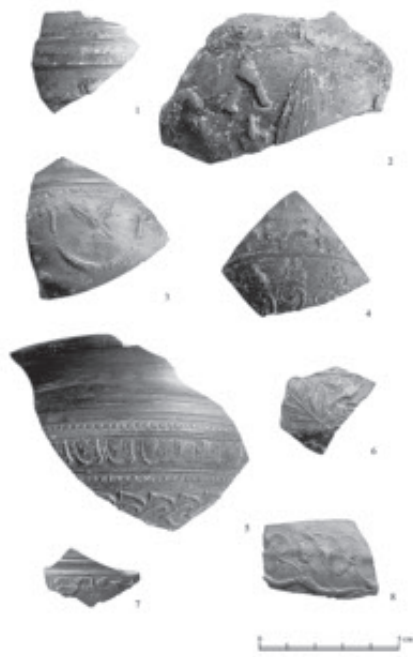


Fig. 10. Fragments from Mesambria, North Shore (1, 2, 4, 6, 8), and from Apollonia UPI 515 and 226 (3, 5).

buildings in area I in Myrmekion is even more generally dated in the 3rd-1st century BC, though the finds from 3rd-2nd century BC predominate.⁴⁶ One of the fragments from Apollonia is found in a stratum covering an early Hellenistic room (UPI XII-515, sect. 27).⁴⁷ A Rhodian amphora stamp of eponym Kleukrates I and a Mesambrian coin of the type Dionysos-bunch of grapes define the termini between 174/172 BC⁴⁸ and the beginning of the 1st century BC⁴⁹ for the context and for the associated artifacts. Another fragment from Apollonia appeared in a building context (perhaps a courtyard, or possibly an interior room) together with material from the end of the 3rd-mid-2nd century BC (UPI 226, sect. 18).⁵⁰ Among the pottery are 45 fragments of mouldmade bowls, mainly of East Greek origin. Approximately half of them could be attributed to the Ephesian ΠΑΡ-monogram workshop, which starts around the second quarter of the 2nd century BC, but the export of its products may start shortly after 166 BC when Delos became free port.⁵¹ Since the presented group of mouldmade bowls is small and probably short-lived, a date around the late second quarter to the middle of the 2nd century BC for its manufacturing could be supposed. Such a date is generally confirmed by the characteristics of the decoration.

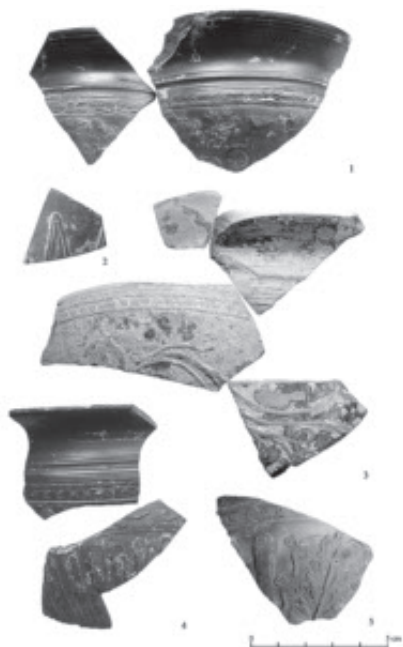


Fig. 11. 1-2, 4-5 from Mesambria, North shore; 3 from Mesambria, unknown provenance.

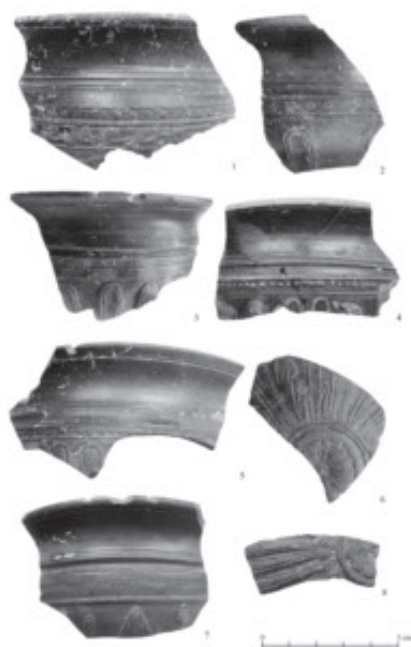


Fig. 12. Fragments from Mesambria, North shore.



Fig. 13. From Mesambria, grave 4/1964; 2 from Mesambria, North shore.



Fig. 14. Bowl from Tomis, grave II/1962 (photos by C. Băjenaru).



Fig. 15. 1 Bowl from Odessos (photos by E. Mirčeva); 2 fragments from Pantikapaion (after Zabelina 1984b, fig. 9g); 3 from Olbian agora (after Levi 1964b, fig. 13.1); 4 from Myrmekion (after Gajdukevič 1959, fig. 88).

Origin

V. Zabelina suggested that the Pantikapaeon fragments were imported from Pergamon, since they had some similarities with supposed Pergamene materials (the Pergamene origin of which was not proven).⁵² Similar provenance was supposed for other finds from the North Pontic area on the basis of their decoration.⁵³ Ocheșeanu suggested that the vessel found in the cemetery of Tomis was manufactured in Antiocheia.⁵⁴ It was impossible to me to find mouldmade bowls of such fabric and shape in the publications on Pergamene and Antiochean pottery, while the analogies of the decoration are just partial, so most probably they were produced somewhere else. Regarding the finds from Daskyleion, E. Derebyolu supposed that they were created in a local workshop.⁵⁵ The distribution of the finds, which is almost exclusively limited to the shore of the Black Sea, suggests that the group was made somewhere in that area. The fragments from Daskyleion, though discovered geographically out of the Pontic coastal zone, do not contradict the hypothesis about



Fig. 16. Distribution of the Pontic grey mouldmade bowls

the Pontic origin of the group, since both regions are closely connected politically, economically and culturally.⁵⁶ In the publication of the bowls from the cemeteries at Odessos and Olbia, it was supposed that they were locally produced.⁵⁷ It seems hardly likely, because of the scarcity of the finds there. In terms of the quantity, Mesambria is the most plausible candidate for the place of production. Here not only is the most numerous group discovered, but they also constitute 18 % of all finds of mouldmade bowls from Mesambria. That percentage drastically increases (ca. 30 %), when only the finds from excavations are taken into consideration. Two of the fragments from the excavations on the North Shore probably belong to vessels, made in the same mould (Fig. 2.2-3). Grey wares are preferred in the local workshops during the Classical period and continued to be produced later. A piece of a mould, found among the remains of a Hellenistic house, though differently decorated than the group presented here, suggests the existence of an atelier manufacturing mouldmade bowls in Mesambria.⁵⁸

Conclusion

The presented group of mouldmade bowls has a specific technology of manufacturing and decoration, shape and decorative motifs. Despite the homogeneity in respect of technology, shape and the general organization of decoration, it is quite eclectic from the point of view of the details, so parallels from

various places in the Greek mainland and Asia Minor could be observed. The bowls were probably produced around the middle of the 2nd century BC. The present state of research defines a quite limited area of distribution, generally in the Western and Northern Black sea region. That distribution encourages identification of a local origin of the group, and some arguments favour Mesambria as a manufacturing centre.

Notes

- 1 I am very grateful to A. Božkova for the opportunity to study the mouldmade bowls from her excavations on the north shore of the Nesebar Peninsula, which provide the basic data for the research of the group. I would like to express my gratitude to P. Kijaškina, D. Nedev and M. Gjuzelev for the opportunity to study some unpublished fragments from Mesambria and Apollonia. Special thanks are due to E. Mirčeva and C. Băjenaru for the photographs of the finds from Odessos and Tomis. I am also grateful to the editors of the book for their notes and comments.
- 2 Božkova et al. 2007; Božkova et al. 2008.
- 3 Pfrommer 1987, pl. 62 (chronological and spatial distribution).
- 4 Several fragments from Daskyleion (Dereboylyu 2003 pl. XLIII.KA27, KA29) that could not be attributed with certainty to the presented group, since they are illustrated only with drawings, have a pine-cone decoration. The fragment from Olbia, decorated with concentric semicircles (Levi 1964b, fig. 13.2), supposedly from the same group, is also excluded from the analysis both because there is no correspondence in the known finds and because the clay is much lighter than the glaze, which is atypical.
- 5 Gauvin 1997, pl. 6 (second one on the middle row). Probably similar palmettes decorated the last fragment in the first row, but, though grey in color, it could not be surely attributed to the group. I am very grateful to K. Gospodinov for providing me color photographs of some of the sherds, thus giving me an opportunity to recognize at least two fragments of the presented group (first two pieces from the middle row on the cited plate). Unfortunately, they were not available for more detailed investigation.
- 6 A combination between vine and ivy tendrils could be seen on a bowl from a grave in the Zakuban area, now in Armavir Museum (Lopatin & Malyšev 2002, pl. 6).
- 7 Nelumbo petals, probably alternating with tendrils with enclosed flowers, are represented on the one of the fragments from Ahtopol (Gauvin 1997, pl. 6 – first fragment on the middle row).
- 8 Siebert 1978, pl. 96, AM 31, K 119; 97, Go 72.
- 9 Siebert 1978, 40, pl. 73.
- 10 Waagé 1948, fig. 9-14.
- 11 Goldman ed. 1950, fig. 129-131.
- 12 Conze 1913, pl. 43.13; de Luca 1999, pl. 22.591-592.
- 13 Kossatz 1990, pl. 8. M336; 14. M79; 18. M261 (Pergamene?).
- 14 Goldman 1950, fig. 129.155-156, 159.
- 15 Kossatz 1990, pl. 5. M137, M432; 7. M739.
- 16 De Luca 1999, fig. 7.472.

- 17 Smirnova 1967, fig. 56; Zabelina 1984b, fig. 10b (Pergamene); Domăneanțu 2000, pl. 30.433 (?).
- 18 Gauvin 1997, pl. 6 (last fragment on the third row).
- 19 Domăneanțu 2000, pl. 36.544 (Pergamene).
- 20 Smirnova 1967, fig. 55-56.
- 21 Daševskaja et al. 1976, 321.
- 22 Laumonier 1977, pl. 61.870 (Philon); Hausmann 1977-1978, 225, pl. 56 (private collection; South Pontic origin).
- 23 Hübner 1997, 260, pl. 191.
- 24 Laumonier 1977, pl. 31.3343; 35.1444; 36.665; 44.4056 (Monogram); 50.853, 373 (Apoll.); Gassner 1997, 86, pl. 86.223, 272-273.
- 25 Ivanov 1963, fig. 93; Domăneanțu 2000, pl. 36.544. Such triple rosettes decorate the medallions on some unpublished bowls from Mesambria.
- 26 Rotroff 1982a, pl. 24.126; 61.341; 94.113.
- 27 De Luca 1968, pl. 54.342, 348; 55.340; 59.436; Schäfer 1968, fig. 14.1.
- 28 Laumonier 1977, pl. 89.1407 (Ros. éch.), 104.4670 (Godr.); Mitsopoulos-Leon 1991, pl. 79.D20.
- 29 Ćimbuleva 2005, Fig. 5.1.
- 30 Gjuzev 2007, 274, fig. 1; Nedev & Draževa 2007, 357, fig. 2.
- 31 Nedev & Gospodinov 2007, 353-354, fig. 1.
- 32 Gauvin 1997, pl. 6.
- 33 Zabelina 1984b, 169, fig. 9.
- 34 Levi 1964b, 251, fig. 13.1; Parovič-Pešikan 1974, 95, fig. 86.5.
- 35 Gajdukevič 1958, 209, fig. 64.1; 1959, 80, fig. 88.
- 36 Kovalenko 1987, fig. II.1-2. According to S. Kovalenko (personal communication) the fragment no. 91/102 from Kara Tobe (Vnukov & Kovalenko 1998, fig. 4.6) belongs to the same group, though the shape is unusual. Similar to discussed form and decoration pattern is no. 97/187 (Vnukov & Kovalenko 1998, fig. 6.1), which, however could be "red" instead of grey in color. I am very grateful to Kovalenko, who turned my attention on these bowls, as well as to the fact that at Kara Tobe a Mesambrian bronze coin from the 240/235-210/200 BC has been found (Karayotov 2005, 198, fig. 8).
- 37 Lopatin & Malyšev 2002, fig. 6.
- 38 Tončeva 1953, 38, fig. 65.
- 39 Bucovala 1967, 92-93, Fig. 79d; Ocheșeanu 1969, 236-238, Fig. 35-36.
- 40 Dereboylyu 2003, pl. XLII.KA10, KA19; XLIII.KA27 (?), KA29 (?).
- 41 Parovič-Pešikan 1974, 95 (the middle of the 2nd century BC); Zabelina 1984b, 169.
- 42 Bucovala 1967, 93.
- 43 Ocheșeanu 1969, 238.
- 44 Kovalenko 1987, 8-9.
- 45 Ćimbuleva 2005, 95; Božkova 1997, 12, fig. 6, pl. I (type III.1; 2nd -beginning of the 1st century BC).
- 46 Gajdukevič 1959, 71.
- 47 Unpublished. Personal information from D. Nedev and M. Gjuzev.
- 48 Finkielsztejn 2001, pl. 19 (period IIIId; ca. 175/173-170/168 BC).
- 49 Karajotov 1992, 47; 2000, 73-76.
- 50 Unpublished material. I am grateful to D. Nedev for the opportunity to study them.

- 51 Laumonier 1977, 7-12; Rogl 2001a, 100; and see Christine Rogl's chapter in the present volume.
- 52 Zabelina 1984b, 168.
- 53 Levi 1964b, 251; Kovalenko 1987, 9.
- 54 Ocheșeanu 1969, 238.
- 55 Dereboylyu 2003, 220.
- 56 Vinogradov 1995, 5-7.
- 57 Tončeva 1953, 38; Parovič-Pešikan 1974, 95.
- 58 Ognenova 1960, 228; Čimbuleva 2005, 112. Some unpublished fragments from Apollonia suggest that parabolic cups were also produced in the workshop presented here or a related workshop.