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A LEAD-GLAZED SKYPHOS WITH FIGURATIVE RELIEF DECORATION FROM THE SANCTUARY OF REITIA IN ESTE (ITALY)

1. The discovery context

The Sanctuary of *Reitia* was discovered in 1880 in Este (fig. 1) in the property of Domenico Baratella¹. Between 1880 and 1890 the Sanctuary was excavated by the land-owners; then, from 1987 to 1991, it was systematically investigated by the Institut für Ur-und Frühgeschichte of the University of Cologne, under the direction of Professor Dr. Heinz-Werner Dämmer, who is overseeing the publication of any materials found and funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft².

The Sanctuary's ritual attendance lasted from the end of the 7th century BC to the 2nd century AD almost, showing a slow assimilation of the *Reitia* Venetian cult (the goddess *Pora* and *Sainate*, goddess of commerce and river Adige, of health, of procreation, of writing) into the *Minerva/Bona Dea* Roman one³. The uppermost documented activity in the Sanctuary is the teaching of writing, certified by the use of Venetic alphabetical language tablets and writing *styli*; women were admitted both to the teaching and the learning⁴.

2. The lead-glazed skyphos

During the 19th century's excavations of the Sanctuary of *Reitia* a lead-glazed *skyphos* with moulding figurative relief decoration was found. The rim is vertical, the bowl is hemispherical, the ring-shaped handles have oval section with two grooves, set under the rim and fixed with moulded on the top and plate fillet under tongue, the clay is reddish and the glaze is green. There are several fragments conserved, partially recomposed and the bottom is completely missing⁵ (figs. 2–3).

This type of Hellenistic tradition pottery was produced as an imitation of precious silver specimens in *Asia Minor*: here different workshops have been identified, located

along the coast of Turkey, mainly in Tarsus and in Perge and then in Mytilene, on Lesbos Island, operating between the beginning of the 1st century BC and the end of the 1st century AD⁶. Other workshops were probably in Smyrne and in the south-west area of *Asia Minor*, but they have not yet been located⁷.

The *skyphos* seems to be referable to the Hochuli-Gysel *Ringhenkelskyphos I*, the short-wided body type, ring-shaped bottom and typical vertical ring-shaped handles with two grooves, set under the rim and fixed with moulded on the top and plate fillet under tongue⁸. While very worn-out and fragmented, the decoration of the wall, where you can see some human figures, is perhaps connectable to an erotic scene, a typical decorative motif of this kind of Eastern production, particularly of the *atelier* of Tarsus⁹.

During the first Imperial Age glazed pottery was also produced in Gaul¹⁰ and in different parts of Italy, initially as imitation of the Eastern models, then like the result of the elaboration of originals forms and decorations¹¹. Primarily, a North Italian production has been identified, characterized by shapes different from those of the East, with plant motifs or figurative decorations borrowed from the Italic *terra sigillata* repertoire, often applied *à la barbotine* and not mould decorated¹². Also the presence of similar shapes and decorative motifs to those of North-Italic decorated *terra sigillata*, referable to the potters *Aco* and *Sarius*, has led to

¹ PROSDOCIMI 1882; GHIRARDINI 1888.

² DÄMMER 1990; ID. 2002; ID. 2009.

³ CAPUIS/CHIECO BIANCHI 2002, 235–242; MAGGIANI 2002, 78–79, 82–83. For the bronze figurines of Minerva see BOLLA 2008, 45–55.

⁴ CAPUIS/CHIECO BIANCHI 2002, 236.

⁵ H 7; width 9; fondo Baratella 1881–1886, I.G. 13297 (inv. civ. 1184). See CIPRIANO forthcoming. I would like to thank dott.ssa Elodia Bianchin, Director of Museo Nazionale Atestino and professor Heinz-Werner Dämmer. I am grateful to Costanza Vecchiet for the translation revision. The images are granted by the Italian Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo; reproduction prohibited.

⁶ GABELMANN 1974; HOCHULI-GYSEL 1977; MACCABRUNI 1985, 16; SANNAZARO 1994, 232–235; HOCHULI-GYSEL 2002.

⁷ HOCHULI-GYSEL 2002, 311.

⁸ EAD. 1977, 21–23.

⁹ EAD. 1977, 54–55 nn. 113–117a table 25.

¹⁰ DESBAT 1986 about lead-glazed pottery manufactured in Lyon by 20 BC.

¹¹ We remember the Central Italian glazed-ware (SANNAZARO 1994, 238–241; MARTIN 1995) and the Vesuvian manufacture (DI GIOIA 2006, especially 139–140); Sarsina glazed-ware is made by the 3rd c. AD, (MAIOLI/GELICHI 1992, 221–231).

¹² HOCHULI-GYSEL 1977, 137–141; she connect to North Italian production two specimens found in Adria (I 4 and I 16), two found in Vicenza (I 3 and I 18) and two in Aquileia (I 29 and I 34), characterized by the same shapes and decorations of the Eastern glazed-ware. Gabelmann and Maccabruni think rather that *skyphoi* like these ones, very similar to those of Tarsus, were imported from *Asia Minor* (GABELMANN 1979, 681–682; MACCABRUNI 1987, 170–171). – For the glazed-ware produced in the North-West Italy see MACCABRUNI 1985, 16–19; BRECCIAROLI TABORELLI 2000; EAD. 2011, 131. – For the glazed ware produced in the North-East Italy see LAVIZZARI PEDRAZZINI 1998, 275. – For lead-glazed *Acobecher* see FINOCCHIARO 1999, 147. – the update of the glazed ware found in North Italy is in BRECCIAROLI TABORELLI 2011, especially 132 note 6.



Fig. 1. Location of Este in the map of Northern Italy.

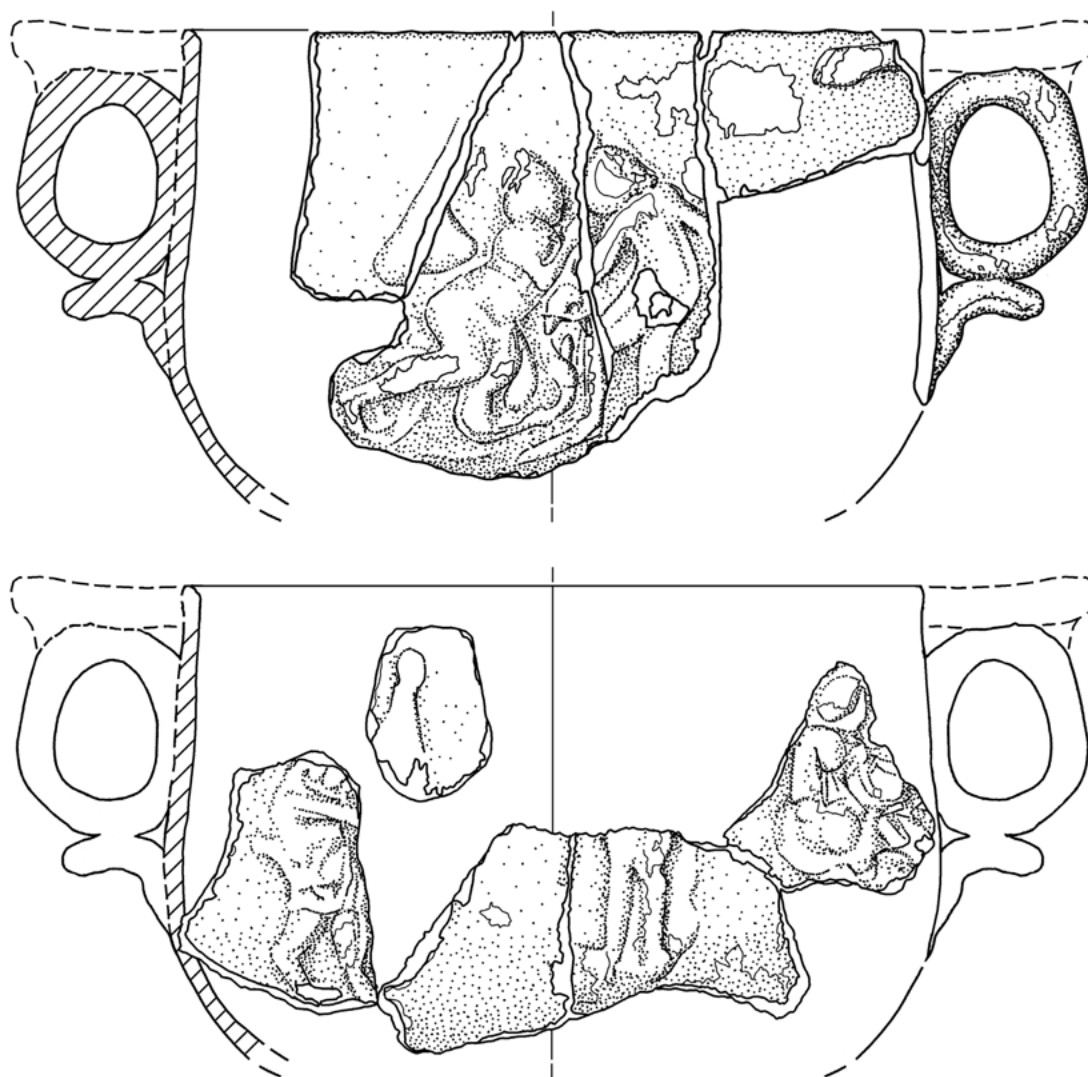


Fig. 2. Este, Sanctuary of *Reitia*. The lead-glazed skyphos. – Scale 1:1 (drawing by F. M. Fedele).



Fig. 3. Este, Sanctuary of *Reitia*. The lead-glazed *skyphos*.

the hypothesis that the lead-glazed pottery was produced in the same factories¹³. Several workshops featured this type of production, both in North-Western and North-Eastern Italy¹⁴; among them we can remember, e.g. the lead-glazed *rytha*, hypothetically produced in the area of Aquileia¹⁵.

Relying on the shape and figurative decoration, the *skyphos* of Este seems to be imported from *Asia Minor*, comparable with the production of Tarsus¹⁶, although the decoration is the product of a tired matrix and the stamp is not precisely recognizable. Two other specimens might be related to the Tarsus production in the *Venetia*: the *skyphos* found in Montagnana, decorated with a Dionysiac *thiasos*¹⁷, and another one from Adria with an erotic scene¹⁸. The three

skyphoi have a different figurative decoration than those identified as North-Italic production¹⁹. They might have arrived through the port of Adria, as merchandise in the loads of cargo ships that transported other products, like slaves, marbles or amphorae. Finally, only the archaeometrical analysis will define the exact provenance of the *skyphoi*.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to assert if the *skyphos* of Este, a rare and precious object, was a votive gift to the *dea Reitia/Minerva* or rather one of the drinking vessels used in the Sanctuary during the libation ceremonies.

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¹³ MACCABRUNI 1985, 18.

¹⁴ See *supra* note 12.

¹⁵ LAVIZZARI PEDRAZZINI 1995, 130–134.

¹⁶ See HOCHULI-GYSEL 1977, 54–55: Erotische Gruppen, Tarsos-Gruppen 1 and Smyrne-Gruppen 1 und 2.

¹⁷ DE MIN 1982.

¹⁸ HOCHULI-GYSEL 1977, 152 table 49, T54 (= FOGOLARI/SCARFI 1970, 8, n. 68.1).

¹⁹ HOCHULI-GYSEL 1977, 194–198.

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