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## THIN-WALLED POTTERY FROM AN EARLY IMPERIAL COMPLEX AT PRIENE / IONIA<sup>1</sup>

For the first time a sizeable spectrum of thin-walled pottery from the current excavations at Priene will be presented, material which is – with exceptions – not known from the earlier excavations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While in late-Hellenistic times the occurrence of thin-walled pottery at Priene seems to be restricted to sporadic imports from Italy<sup>2</sup>, quantities of locally or regionally produced thin-walled drinking vessels increase in the early-Imperial period.

### The early Imperial complex

The material was excavated during the campaigns 2002 and 2003 in the northwest residential quarter of Priene, where it formed a thick layer of quite uniform character covering the buildings of insula E5 after its abandonment. The complex dates from the mid-Augustan period, as is indicated by the presence of the developed Eastern Sigillata A shapes Atlante 7, 8 and 9, the early Eastern Sigillata B cups Atlante 21 and 29, as well as a flat-bottomed ESB plate with rectangular stamp and the base of an Italian-type Sigillata plate Conspetus 11 or 12. Apart from this Sigillata spectrum, the numerous Ephesian and local grey ware platters and lamps, the one-handled micaceous water jar Peacock-Williams class 45, and the broad spectrum of plain and decorated thin-walled pottery itself confirm the chronology.

### Plain vessels

About half of the thin-walled pottery is without decoration or colour-coating. The complex comprises principally drinking vessels with plain or stepped bottoms, which can be grouped into cylindrical and conical beakers with plain or everted lip, and necked beakers with high or low rim (**fig. 1**). While the forms have parallels in late-Republican types from Italy<sup>3</sup>, the micaceous fabric of most fragments points to a high proportion of Ionian products with only some Italian imports.

The decorated vessels can be divided into two categories according to the technique applied, namely barbotine and mould-made decoration.

### Vessels with Barbotine decoration

#### *Net pattern*

The handle of a skyphos or small jug has a net pattern made of crossed barbotine stripes (**fig. 2**). It can be compared with the western cup form Mayet XXVIII with net-decorated handles and barbotine leaves on the body<sup>4</sup>, and with cups in Lyons ware covered with net pattern or arcades on the outside<sup>5</sup>. The parallels from the West date from the first half of the first century A. D., more precisely from the Tiberian period onwards<sup>6</sup>, but as the dark brown micaceous fabric of our piece indicates a local or regional provenance this raises the question of whether the net pattern developed independently in the East, maybe even somewhat earlier.

Apart from this remarkable piece, there are beakers with cord and thorn decoration in barbotine technique.

<sup>1</sup> This paper draws on preliminary results from my doctoral thesis “Untersuchungen zu Herkunft und Produktion hellenistischer und kaiserzeitlicher Keramik in Priene”. The material presented will be published in more detail in a forthcoming monograph. I am obliged to Prof. W. Raeck, the director of the research projects of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt at Priene since 1998, and E. Winter, responsible for the research in Insula E5, for access to the pottery. For productive discussions of the thin-walled pottery I would like to thank E. Schindler Kaudelka and S. Zabelicky-Scheffenecker. The linguistic revision of this article was the work of D. Wigg-Wolf.

<sup>2</sup> A late-Hellenistic deposit from the Athena sanctuary at Priene yielded a small amount of thin-walled pottery. The fragments are of the beaker form Marabini I with dotted festoons in barbotine technique (MARABINI MOEVS 1973 no. 11 pl. 2; nos. 22–24 pls. 2–3; RICCI 1985, 243 f. pl. 78, 1–3). From their granular texture and orange colour they can be considered imports from central Italy. Apart from these occasional pieces there is no other imported and no locally made thin-walled pottery at all in the late-Hellenistic deposit. – I presented this complex in its entirety at the 7<sup>th</sup> scientific meeting on Hellenistic pottery in 2005 in Egio, Greece. The paper will be published in the volume Η Επιστημονική Συνάντηση για την Ελληνιστική Κεραμική.

<sup>3</sup> For beakers with plain rim see MARABINI MOEVS 1973, 95 f. (form XXX); 102–104 nos. 160–171 pls. 16. 64 (form XXXIII) = RICCI 1985, 275 pl. 88, 10 (Tipo 1/161). – For beakers with everted lip see MARABINI MOEVS 1973, 74 no. 96 pls. 9. 60 (form XII); RICCI 1985, 276 f. pl. 89, 7–8 (Tipo 1/173, 1/378). – For necked beakers with high rim see MARABINI MOEVS 1973, 66–68 nos. 69–78 pls. 7. 59 (form VII) = RICCI 1985, 248 pl. 79, 6–7 (Tipo 1/20, 1/362). – For necked beakers with low rim see MARABINI MOEVS 1973, 59–61 nos. 36–52 pls. 4–5. 57–58 (form IV); RICCI 1985, 247 f. pl. 79, 5 (Tipo 1/19).

<sup>4</sup> MAYET 1975, 62 no. 221 pl. 29.

<sup>5</sup> GREENE 1979, 22 fig. 6.9.

<sup>6</sup> MAYET 1975, 62; GREENE 1979, 17.

### Cord decoration

Seven pieces from the complex have so-called cord decoration which was attained by the application of strips of soft clay to the surface of the vessel while it was still fresh, and subsequent rouletting. The most prominent examples are a fragment of a base with a sequence of vertical corded lines (fig. 3), and a wall fragment with vertical lines alternating with a rope-like band. The fabric of the pieces found in Priene is either brown or red with a grey surface, in both cases soft and very micaceous.

Cord decoration is very common in the West, especially in central Italy at Cosa<sup>7</sup> or, for example, at the Casa di Livia on the Palatine of Rome<sup>8</sup>, and dates from late-Republican times until the Augustan period. An example in the Museo Nazionale Romano shows a comparable vertical rope-shaped line between sandglass motifs made up of thorn decoration<sup>9</sup>. Beakers with cord decoration are also numerous in the North-west at the Roman military camp of Dangstetten<sup>10</sup> and are also known from Neuss<sup>11</sup>. Description, and above all analysis<sup>12</sup> indicate that the fabric of the cord-decorated beakers from Dangstetten – probably imports from Lyons – differs clearly from our examples. The western fabric is sandy and harder, whereas the pieces from Priene are much softer and are rich in mica. The play with two colours achieved by using different clays or coating – light stripes on dark ground or vice versa – is not seen on our examples. Chemical analyses with X-ray fluorescence of one wall fragment with cord decoration from Priene excludes a western origin, and points to a source in Asia Minor, probably in Ionia, but the exact production centre is still unknown.

In the East few comparisons are known or at least not been published. A half-complete vessel from Pergamon<sup>13</sup> in reddish brown fabric without colour coating seems to be of Eastern origin, whereas the provenance of a rim fragment from Didyma<sup>14</sup>, described as yellow with grey surface, has to remain open. Judging by its frequency in the West and its scarcity in the East, cord decoration seems to have been adopted from Western models.

### Thorn decoration

The same is the case for thorn-decorated beakers. In our complex from Priene there are four fragments with long, extremely thin needles reaching from the rim probably to the bottom of the vessel (fig. 4). Here, too, barbotine technique was used to form the spine relief with two parallel strokes, ending straight or in arrowheads. The fabric is like that of the previous beakers, brown or red with a grey surface, but fired at a higher temperature, contains less mica and is very thin-walled. Chemical analyses could unfortunately not be carried out on these vessels.

There are also western thin-walled vessels decorated with long needles, e.g. from Magdalensberg<sup>15</sup>, Neuss<sup>16</sup> and Zadar<sup>17</sup>, whereas neither the common pine-scale decoration, consisting of wider elements accentuated in relief, nor the true thorn decoration, consisting of shorter elements arranged in registers<sup>18</sup>, correspond to our fishbone-like fine long elements. Pine-scale and thorn-decorated beakers were produced in the West from the second half of the second century B. C. until the Augustan period, and exported occa-

sionally to the East. They are found, for example, at Athens, Corinth, Ephesos and Labraunda<sup>19</sup>.

The decoration as seen on the examples from Priene is often paralleled in the East, where it is encountered on thin-walled beakers along the entire west coast of Asia Minor from Troy<sup>20</sup>, Pergamon<sup>21</sup>, Samos<sup>22</sup> and Ephesos<sup>23</sup> to Knidos<sup>24</sup>. Possibly the inspiration for the barbotine technique as well as the decoration principle were taken from the western thin-walled pottery, but in the East there seems to be a preference for the thorn decoration consisting of long vertical elements.

This abstract, delicate pattern was also employed on other Eastern vessels. On the one hand there are Hellenistic relief bowls with so-called nail decoration<sup>25</sup>, and on the other hand

<sup>7</sup> MARABINI MOEVS 1973, 55 f. 262 nos. 16–17 pls. 2. 56 (Form I); p. 61 f. 266 nos. 53–54 pls. 5. 58 (Form IV); p. 64. 267 nos. 66–67 pls. 6. 59 (Form V–VI); see also RICCI 1985, 327 decorazione 3, 230 pl. 106, 16–17.

<sup>8</sup> G. CARRETONI, Roma, Palatino. Saggi nell'interno della Casa di Livia. *Not. Scavi Ant.* 11, 1957, 108 fig. 32 b–c.

<sup>9</sup> G. H. MCFADDEN, A Tomb of the Necropolis of Ayios Ermoyenis at Kourion. *Am. Journal Arch.* 50, 1946, 481 no. 9224 pl. 49 = RICCI 1981, 325 decorazione 45 pl. 105, 17. The piece is of unknown provenance.

<sup>10</sup> FINGERLIN 1986, pl. 26.

<sup>11</sup> M. VEGAS, Die augusteische Gebrauchskeramik von Neuss. *Novaesium VI = Limesforschungen* 14 (Berlin 1975) 5–7. 51 pl. 1, 4–5.7–9.

<sup>12</sup> K. ROTH-RUBI was so kind as to show me the thin-walled pottery from Dangstetten. Her results were published after the closing of this article.

<sup>13</sup> JAPP 1999, 330 no. 117 fig. 4 pl. 28.

<sup>14</sup> U. WINTERMEYER, Die hellenistische und frühkaiserzeitliche Gebrauchskeramik. Auf Grundlage der stratifizierten Fundkeramik aus dem Bereich der Heiligen Straße. *Didyma III 2* (Mainz 2004) 136 Typ Be 4.3 fig. 1328.

<sup>15</sup> E. SCHINDLER KADELKA, Die dünnwandige Gebrauchskeramik vom Magdalensberg (Klagenfurt 1975) 41 f. pls. 2. 3 a–b. 4 a–c.

<sup>16</sup> H. LEHNER, Die Einzelfunde von Novaesium. *Bonner Jahrb.* 111–112, 1904, 354 pl. 27, 36.

<sup>17</sup> Z. BRUSIĆ, Hellenistic and Roman Relief Pottery in Liburnia (North-East Adriatic, Croatia). *BAR Internat. Ser.* 817 (Oxford 1999) 30. 117 nos. 393. 397 fig. 57.

<sup>18</sup> MARABINI MOEVS 1973, 54 f. nos. 13–15 pls. 2. 56 (form I); p. 68 f. nos. 79–85 pls. 7–8. 59 (form IV and VII); p. 154 f. nos. 249–258 pls. 26–27. 70–71 (form LI). For the difference between the two patterns see there p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Corinth: O. BRONEER, *Investigations at Corinth, 1946–1947*. *Hesperia* 16, 1947, 240 pl. 60, 16; P. RUSSELL, Corinth: Excavations of 1980. Early Roman Thin-walled Wares and Lamps. *Hesperia* 50, 1981, 35 f.; Ephesos: V. MITSOPOULOS-LEON, Die Basilika am Staatsmarkt in Ephesos. *Kleinfunde I. Keramik hellenistischer und römischer Zeit*. *FiE IX 2 II* (Wien 1991) 132. 135 f. nos. K 1–7 pls. 180–182; Labraunda: P. HELLSTRÖM, Pottery of Classical and Later Date. *Terracotta Lamps and Glass*. *Labraunda 2 I* (Lund 1965) 37. 72 no. 288 pl. 15.

<sup>20</sup> B. TEKKÖK, Troy from the Julio-Claudian to the Flavian Period. Its Connections with the Mediterranean World. *Acta RCRF* 38, 2003, 239 fig. 2, 26.35.

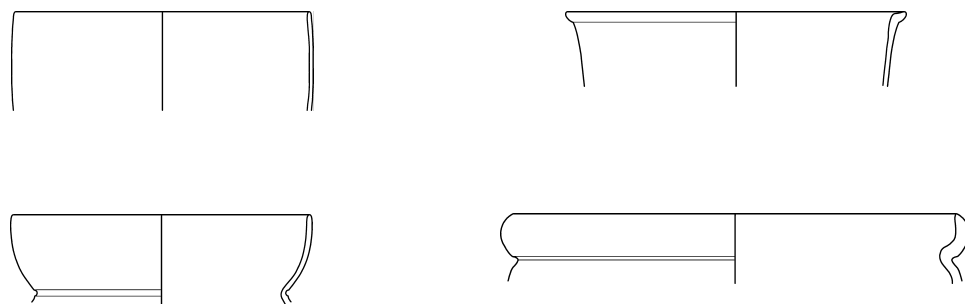
<sup>21</sup> JAPP 1999, 306. 329 nos. 113–116 fig. 4 pl. 27.

<sup>22</sup> R. TÖLLE-KASTENBEIN, Das Kastro Tigani. Die Bauten und Funde griechischer, römischer und byzantinischer Zeit. *Samos 14* (Bonn 1974) 162 fig. 269 A.

<sup>23</sup> R. MERİÇ, Späthellenistisch-römische Keramik und Kleinfunde aus einem Schachtbrunnen am Staatsmarkt in Ephesos. *FiE IX 3* (Wien 2002) 71. 76 nos. K 347–348 pl. 31; S. LADSTÄTTER, Keramik. In: H. Thür (Hrsg.), *Hanghaus 2 in Ephesos. Die Wohneinheit 4. Baubefund Ausstattung Funde*. *FiE VIII 6* (Wien 2005) 235. 283 no. K 166 pl. 155; p. 236. 299 nos. K 327–328 pls. 168. 214.

<sup>24</sup> KÖGLER 2004, 88 fig. 13.

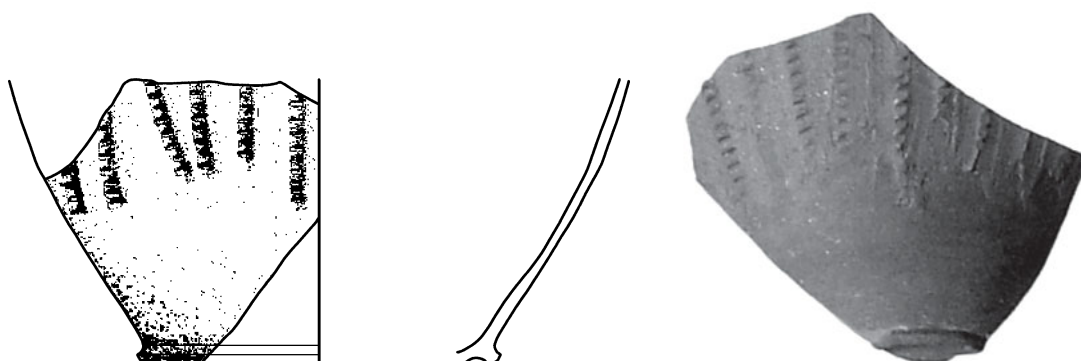
<sup>25</sup> For an example see LAUMONIER 1977, 119 no. 4851 pl. 27. There is also a locally produced relief bowl with 'nail decoration' in the same early-Imperial complex from Priene.



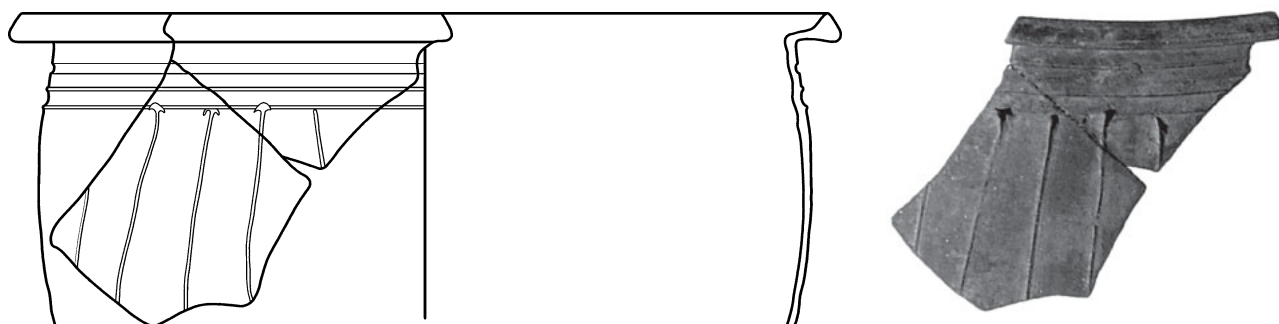
**Fig. 1.** Plain thin-walled drinking vessels from Priene. Scale 1:2.



**Fig. 2.** Thin-walled vessel with barbotine net pattern from Priene. Scale 1:1.



**Fig. 3.** Thin-walled beaker with barbotine cord decoration from Priene. Scale 1:1.



**Fig. 4.** Thin-walled beaker with barbotine thorn decoration from Priene. Scale 1:1.

attention should be drawn to finely ribbed mould-blown glass bowls from the first century A. D.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from vessels decorated in barbotine technique, there are no examples with rouletting or sand decoration within the complex, but a series of mould-made thin-walled vessels, which have either so-called *Kommadekor* or floral decoration, is present.

### Vessels with mould-made decoration

#### 'Kommadekor'

The first group of vessels with mould-made decoration is represented by a shallow, baggy beaker with small out-turned rim and stepped bottom (fig. 5). The high rim zone is plain while the lower half of the vessel has 'Kommadekor' – small, regular thorns in relief – which is arranged in groups of triangles pointing upwards and downwards between single tongue motifs. Incorporated in the decoration are single Greek letters from the potter's name, who remains unknown. The chemical analysis of this colour-coated micaceous beaker of soft consistency reveals differences to the fabric of mould-made thin-walled vessels from Italy and Lyons, but the same elemental pattern as other late-Hellenistic and early-Imperial fine pottery from Priene.

At least two other examples with decoration of this kind are also present in the same complex. Apart from another fragment of a base with the bottom of the zone of 'Kommadekor', there is a wall fragment with a thin brown wash, on which the Greek potter's name ending in "...NΔPOY" appears at top of the main decoration zone.

The best parallel comes from the old excavations at Priene<sup>27</sup>. The fabric is comparable to the locally made beaker, and the piece has only slight variations on the decoration: between pairs of two tongues the 'Kommadekor' seems to be grouped to form lozenges. In between these elements the remains of a Greek letter again appears.

In the West 'Kommadekor' is well known from the ACO-beakers<sup>28</sup>, which derive their modern name from the potter working in Northern Italy who most often signed them. Their production began at the latest in the early Augustan period. Although ACO-beakers are normally of a high and slender form, there is also a shallow beaker type comparable to our vessel form<sup>29</sup>. Most often the 'Kommadekor' covers the whole surface, but it is sometimes also grouped into geometric forms<sup>30</sup>. Italian ACO-beakers reached the East<sup>31</sup>, as sporadic finds from Corinth or Knossos show.

Apart from the Priene group, the 'Kommadekor' is encountered on other Eastern examples, for example a mould-made beaker in Pergamene Sigillata<sup>32</sup> from the first half of first century A. D. with 'Kommadekor' arranged quite regularly and probably covering the entire surface. While the shape of a skyphos with handle plate from Sardis<sup>33</sup> is familiar from lead-glazed wares, the vessel is made in colour-coated ware. The decoration could be described as 'Kommadekor', although it is technically different being composed of vertical strokes in barbotine technique resembling the thorn ware.

In the East there is no tradition of 'Kommadekor', which was therefore most probably adapted from the Italian mod-

els. On the other hand the tongue motifs, the colour-coating and of course the Greek lettering is of Eastern character. The features are fused to an eclectic style.

#### Floral decoration

The second group of vessels with mould-made decoration comprises three fragments of thin-walled open forms, presumably beakers, with floral decoration.

On the first example (fig. 6) with a brown colour coating the tongue motif appears again; in this case at least four of them are grouped together. The tongues alternate with a vertical branch with pairs of lanceolate leaves and ovoid fruits. This plant is best identified as stylized myrtle<sup>34</sup>.

The second fragment with a shiny brown colour coating shows the four-tongue motif in the centre, to the left the myrtle branch and a different floral motif to the right: pine cones are combined with pine needles or grain ears, which were a popular motif for garlands of fruit on Rhodian round altars<sup>35</sup>.

On the third example, which has a flaking red colour coat, there are bunches made up of myrtle leaves and fruits facing to the right. In the border of ovuli without darts, also present on the first example, the potters name Athenaios (?) is written in Greek.

The best comparison is found again among the material from the old excavations at Priene<sup>36</sup>: a mould-made beaker consists of a different, light fabric with little mica, but also has horizontally arranged myrtle bunches. None of the examples with mould-made floral decoration has been examined by XRF so far, and their provenance remains open. The different fabrics speak for various production centres.

In contrast to the 'Kommadekor', there is no clear comparison in the West for the vertically arranged floral motifs. Among the ACO-beakers I could find only a unique example from a north Italian necropolis<sup>37</sup>, on which pomegranate trees alternate with birds and narrow arcades resembling the tongue motif. But apart from broad arcades the principle of vertical decoration is scarce on ACO-beakers<sup>38</sup>. Instead

<sup>26</sup> E. M. STERN, The Toledo Museum of Art. Roman Mold-blown Glass. The First through Sixth Centuries (Rome 1995) 111–113 nos. 13–14 fig. p. 180.

<sup>27</sup> ZAHN 1904, 409 no. 50 fig. 533.

<sup>28</sup> Generally see LAVIZZARI PEDRAZZINI 1987; SCHINDLER-KAUDELKA 1980; DIES. 1998.

<sup>29</sup> LAVIZZARI PEDRAZZINI 1987, 32 type 4a pl. 2.

<sup>30</sup> See for example SCHINDLER-KAUDELKA 1998, 302 nos. 2–3. 5 fig. p. 321: groups of 'Kommas' bunched into triangles and lozenges.

<sup>31</sup> Corinth: J. W. HAYES, Roman Pottery from the South Stoa at Corinth. *Hesperia* 42, 1973, 460 no. 179 pl. 89; Knossos: DERS., The Villa Dionysos Excavations, Knossos. The Pottery. *Annu. British School Athens* 78, 1983, 138 no. 212 fig. 17.

<sup>32</sup> MEYER-SCHLICHTMANN 1988, 82 f. no. 37 pls. 4, 10, 38.

<sup>33</sup> S. I. ROTROFF/A. OLIVER, The Hellenistic Pottery from Sardis. The Finds through 1994 (Cambridge 2003) 174 no. 749 pl. 132.

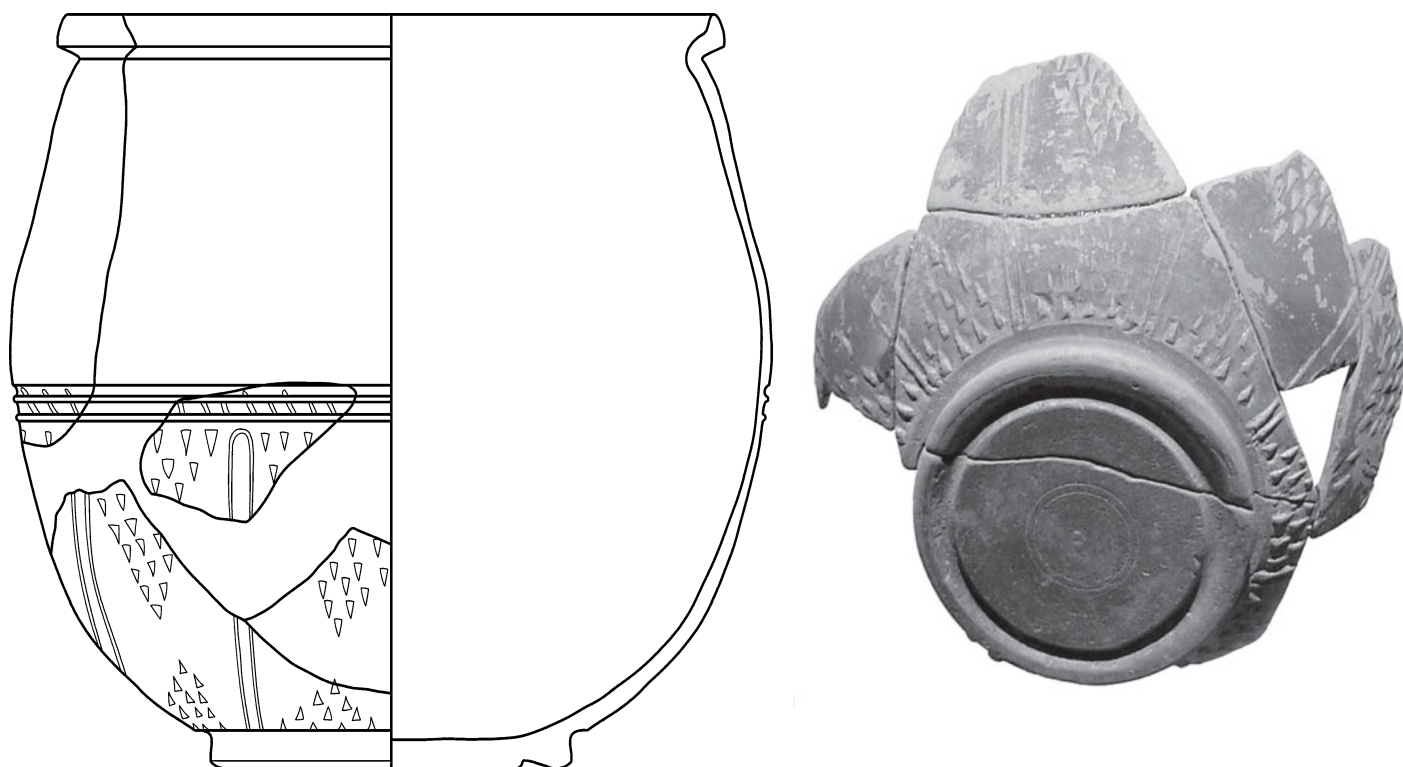
<sup>34</sup> M. MÖBIUS, Pflanzenbilder der minoischen Kunst in botanischer Betrachtung. *Jahrb. DAI* 48, 1933, fig. 6 E–F.

<sup>35</sup> D. BERGES/V. PATSIADA/J. NOLLÉ, Rundaltäre aus Kos und Rhodos (Berlin 1996) 50; 63 compare no. K 3 pl. 5, 1.

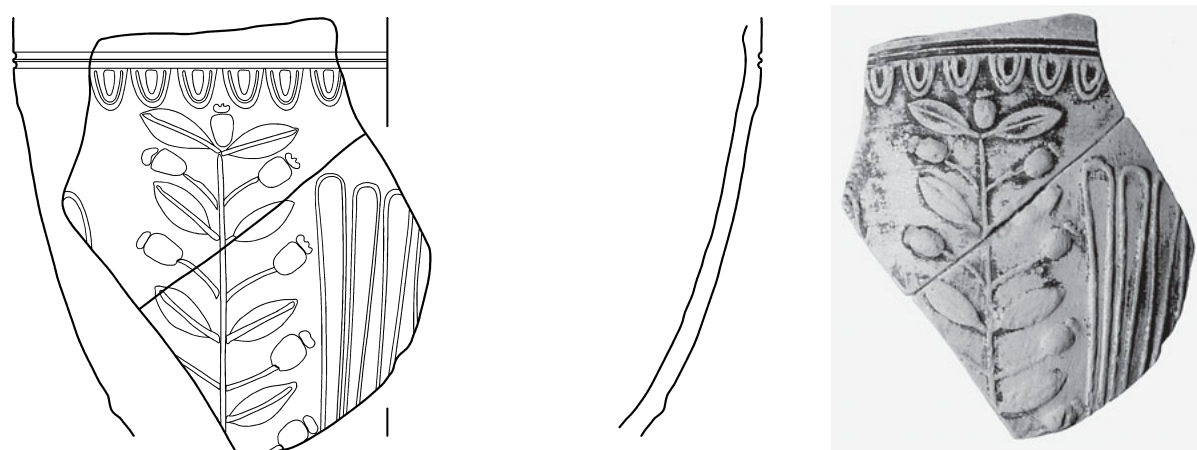
<sup>36</sup> ZAHN 1904, 409 no. 51 fig. 534, 536.

<sup>37</sup> LAVIZZARI PEDRAZZINI 1987, 128 no. 29 pl. 21, 1a–b; L. PASSI PITCHER (Hrsg.), Sub ascia. Una necropoli romana a Nave (Modena 1987) 169–171 fig. 100–101 pl. 20.

<sup>38</sup> For an example with rosettes fixed to a trunk see FINGERLIN 1998, 189 no. 1351, 15 fig. p. 400.



**Fig. 5.** Mould-made thin-walled beaker with 'Kommadekor' from Priene. Scale (left) 1:1.



**Fig. 6.** Mould-made thin-walled vessel with floral decoration from Priene. Height of fragment: 7,3 cm.

branches are generally arranged horizontally. The same goes for Italian-type Sigillata<sup>39</sup> or silver vessels from the West<sup>40</sup>.

Among metal vessels, models such as the Alesia cup probably had an influence on the lead-glazed pottery from Asia Minor<sup>41</sup>. Our vessels with myrtle decoration are closely associated with the mould-made skyphoi from Mytilene and Tarsus, which are frequently decorated with floral motifs. Although the horizontal decoration principle also predominates in the lead-glazed wares, Hochuli-Gysel mentions an example where pomegranate branches are used as upright trees<sup>42</sup>. Ionian relief bowls also use branches of myrtle or pomegranate as decorative motifs. On an example found at Delos the plant is set vertically between pine cones<sup>43</sup>. The tradition of making mould-made vessels continues in Asia Minor from Hellenistic into early Imperial times, as is con-

firmed for example by beakers in Pergamene Sigillata with ovoli and arcades<sup>44</sup>, and Knidian grey ware skyphoi with floral decoration<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> A. STENICO, *La ceramica aretina I* (Milano, Varese 1960) 41 nos. 155–156 pl. 31.

<sup>40</sup> D. E. STRONG, *Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate* (London 1966) 115 pl. 33 B (Alesia); p. 135 pl. 33 A (Pompei).

<sup>41</sup> see HOCHULI-GYSEL 1977.

<sup>42</sup> EAD. 1977, 92; 164 no. T 162 unfortunately without a photograph.

<sup>43</sup> LAUMONIER 1977, 110 no. 960+2031 pl. 25.

<sup>44</sup> MEYER-SCHLICHTMANN 1988, 81 no. 70 pl. 10; *Uygarlıklar Ülkesi Türkiye. Land of Civilizations, Turkey. Ausstellungskat. Japan* (Tokyo 1985) no. 233.

<sup>45</sup> PH. M. KENRICK, *Excavations at Sidi Khrebish, Benghazi (Berenice) III 1. The Fine Pottery. Libya Ant. Suppl. 5* (Tripoli 1985) 63 no. B 87 fig. 10 pl. 2; KÖGLER 2004, 88 f. fig. 14,1–2.

## Summary

Among our decorated thin-walled vessels Eastern traditions can be seen in the colour coating, while the technique of mould-made decoration as well as the floral motifs are inherited from Hellenistic relief bowls and lead glazed skyphoi. On the other hand the beaker form and the 'Kommadekor' are probably the result of a western stimulus. As for the barbotine-decorated vessels, there is a surprising correspondence between Eastern and Western products, suggesting a koine in the Mediterranean area.

Although there are almost no imports such as amphorae, Sigillata or lamps in the early-Imperial complex from Priene, there must have been contacts to Italy, perhaps via the Adria-

tic<sup>46</sup>. The prime example is the shipwreck from Comacchio near Ravenna<sup>47</sup>, which sank before 12 B.C. and was loaded with imports from the East such as Ephesian lamps, Phocaean cooking ware and Aegean amphorae, together with north Italian ACO-beakers and a Sarius-bowl. It is very likely that the three Adriatic ports of Aquileia, Ravenna und Rimini played an important role in the interchange between East and West<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> For a coin from Dyrrachion (Durrës, Albania) at Priene see K. REGLING, *Die Münzen von Priene* (Berlin 1927) 179; 190.

<sup>47</sup> F. BERTI (Hrsg.), *Fortuna Maris. La nave romana di Comacchio. Ausstellungskat. Comacchio* (Bologna 1990).

<sup>48</sup> See also SCHINDLER KAUELKA 1980, 102.

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