

Late Hellenistic Relief Molded Vessels along Axios River

Relief molded wares have been produced in the various centers in Mediterranean in the Hellenistic period, including those in Ancient Macedonia. An abundance of relief molded wares was discovered in the ancient cities along Axios River, proving their popularity and wide distribution in the region. Most of them are the mold-made bowls and among them, there are only few examples of larger table wares, decorated in relief.

This paper refers to a couple of vessels of different shape and fabric (kraters, stamnoid pyxides, table amphora) and decorated with various narrative scenes or floral motifs, which were discovered on the archaeological sites Vardarski Rid near Gevgelia and Isar, near village of Marvinci, both situated in the lower valley of river Axios. Only two of them have been published in the preliminary reports of the excavations, without any further analysis of their shape, decoration and origin. Their relief decoration shows interesting choice of narrative scenes connected with the mythological, historical or literary sources, as well as floral motifs typical for the period. Some of them come from closed deposits, dated towards the end of the 2nd century BC. The closest analogies are found among the finds from Aigai, Pella, Aiani, ancient Florina and Petres, pointing to the existence of pottery workshops which produced relief molded vessels in one or more of these cities, as it is already accepted in the recent scholarly publications.

This paper contributes towards better knowledge and understanding of the production of relief molded vessels in the Hellenistic period in the Ancient Macedonia. The attempt is to define the origin of the products and particular workshop or workshops which produced them. The possible influences which caused the choice of the shapes and decorative motifs are also considered, as well as their influence on the local pottery production in these two ancient towns along Axios River.