

ATHENIAN POTTERY AND CYPRIOTE PREFERENCES
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ATTIC BLACK FIGURE AND RED FIGURE
POTTERY FOUND IN CYPRUS

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Academic dissertation in Classical archaeology and Ancient history,
Dept. of Historical studies, to be publicly defended, by due permission
of the Faculty of Humanities at Göteborg University, on December
10, 2011, at 1.15 p.m., in Lilla hörsalen, Humanisten, Renströmsgatan
6, Göteborg.

Abstract

Ph.D. dissertation at Göteborg University, Sweden, 2011

Title: Athenian pottery and Cypriote preferences. An investigation of the Attic Black figure and Red figure pottery found in Cyprus
Author: Niki Eriksson
Language: English
Series: GOTARC Series B No 57
ISSN: 02 82-6860
ISBN: 978-91-85245-49-6

Attic Black Figure and Red Figure pottery was continuously imported in Cyprus for about 300 years; the first imports are noted ca 580/575 BC, and the last ca 325/300 BC, at about the same time (294 BC) as Cyprus was annexed by Ptolemy I and the city-kingdoms of Cyprus ceased to exist.

The material presented in this thesis amounts to 895 pieces of pottery and every possible effort was made to include all known pottery found in Cyprus. The pottery was first imported in the leading harbours of the time and it was then distributed to the other inland find-places.

A similar distribution to the Eastern Mediterranean suggests that a great part of the Cypriote import is of the same mercantile transactions, which were operated by the Phoenicians. There are also reasons to believe that there were direct commercial contacts with Athens and that private individuals who visited Athens brought some of the pottery to Cyprus.

From the cases where the provenance is known and the exact location/context of the finds is known, it is clearly observed that the pottery was recovered not only from tombs but also in sanctuaries and at the palaces of Amathus and Vouni. Most of the documented information derives from the different excavated necropoleis, and there is no information from the habitation areas with the exception of the above-mentioned palaces.

The iconography reflects the imaginary world of the Greeks, depicting Greek gods, Dionysian scenes and well-known heroes; other mythological scenes depict great struggles such as *Gigantomachies*, *Amazonomachies* and *Grypomachies*, everyday life scenes with hunters and warriors, athletes, erotica, symposia, women's life scenes and cultic scenes. There are also scenes depicting animals, birds and fantasy creatures, floral friezes and other decoration.

The preferences of the Cypriots for specific types of pottery, such as drinking vessels, lekythoi and askoi, indicates that the Cypriots wanted a precious piece of pottery that they could use in their everyday activities and at the same time honour their gods and their dead ancestors. The iconography on the vases varied and it seems that it was not of great importance, and this could have been due to their rich and flexible imagery, which enabled the buyer to use them on different occasions. The kraters were the most popular votive types of pottery. Almost all of them derive from the sanctuaries where they were most probably used during the religious banquets, such as the *theoxenia* and *marzeah*; otherwise all kinds of pottery were used to honour the Cypriote gods.

The Attic pottery became a part of the Cypriots' life and it had also inspired the local potters and painters, who created their own versions of the imagery and enriched them with local elements. The presence of the Attic iconography in the Cypriote sanctuaries does not show any ethnic differences which could have existed among the residents of the find-places. It might therefore be suggested that the Cypriote sanctuaries became the media where the ritual practice and the visual symbols were the nodes of a structuralization process that helped the participants to form a common culture and identity.

Keywords: Attic, black figure, context, Cyprus, find-spots, geography, history, iconography, microarchaeology, pattern, pottery shapes, provenances, red figure, religion, seriality, social practices, structuralization.

