

THE BLACK GLAZED POTTERY IN THE ETRUSCAN CITIES OF THE PO VALLEY: PRODUCTIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

This text is a concise synthesis of the latest results and the methodological issues of the research on black glazed pottery in the Etruscan Po Valley, which will emerge as a vantage point for studying not only local productions, but also North Etruscan and Athenian productions.

From the late Archaic period, the Etruscan Po Valley was integral to the flourishing trade of figured and black glazed vases from Athens [1]. During the 5th century BCE, we observe an increasing amount of Athenian pottery in all of the main Etruscan cities of the Po Valley, in addition to the appearance of local productions with greater or lesser levels of imitation of Athenian pottery, documented through archaeometrical analysis in *Kainua* (i.e. the Etruscan city of Marzabotto) and Spina [2]. In the same period, figured [3] and black glazed [4] vessels arrived from Northern Etruria. During the 4th century BCE, crisis in the network of cities built by Etruscans in the Po Valley brought, among many other things, a constant reduction of imported Athenian pottery [5]. In this new scenario, only several Etruscan cities remained standing, protected by the marshland of the Mincio River, as was the case for Mantua, and by the Po Delta for the ports of Spina and Adria. In the second half of the 4th century BCE, while Athenian importations were coming to an end, new trade routes through the Apennine Mountains were opened by the Celts [6]. The pottery from Volterra was a prestigious element on the table of the Celtic and Etruscan people residing in the Po Valley, as were Athenian vases before, and trade lasted until the end of the 2nd - beginning of the 1st century BCE, as documented in Adria [7]. A diversified local production of black glazed pottery is documented in Spina between the last decades of the 4th and the second half of the 3rd century BCE at the end of the city's life [8], and in Adria, where production continued after the Romanization of the city dated to around the end of the 2nd century BCE [9].

Part of this historic framework is the result of intense research over the last few decades by the Chair of Etruscology at the University of Bologna. A founding aspect of the research we are leading is the multidisciplinary approach. The rich database of samples collected by the laboratories of the Department of Biological, Geological,

and Environmental Sciences (BiGeA) through archaeometrical analysis is regarded by scholars as a point of reference for Northeastern Italy and the Adriatic Sea [10].

The archaeometrical approach has been an essential starting point in the study of black glazed pottery in the Etruscan town of *Kainua* [11]. We identified local production and vessels imported from Northern Etruria during the 5th century and the first half of the 4th century BCE.

The Valle Trebba necropolis in Spina, object of research for the Chair of Etruscology at the University of Bologna [12], is a favored subject of work for this multidisciplinary approach. Until now, we've studied about 3,140 black glazed vases dated between the end of the 6th and the second half of the 3rd century BCE from around 800 of 1,215 graves investigated between 1922 and 1935. A selection of about 64 samples from this mass of pottery has been analyzed through mineral-geochemical methods [13]. Thanks to the results of this analysis and in connection with more traditional archaeological studies, we are able to describe chemical and mineralogical characteristics of imported and local productions. In particular, we identified a local imitation of the Athenian deep wall and convex-concave profile bowl dated to the second half of the 5th century BCE [14]. Other goals attained thanks to the archaeometrical approach are the location of the clay quarries, very close to the city, and the distinction of different pottery production processes within the city as documented by two groups of samples characterized by different clay and firing processes. One of the two groups has a homogeneous particle size and the presence of hematite, which determines the red color of the clay. The other group shows a different degree of purification of the clay and the firing process with a heavier reducing atmosphere. We proved that these two main processes were used by potters from the 5th to the 3rd centuries BCE in different techniques of production (i.e. black glazed pottery and *etrusco-padana* fine pottery).

Unfortunately, we have little archaeometric data on Adria's black glazed pottery. A first effort was made by Luisa Mazzeo in 2007 [15], but that campaign involved few samples. Nowadays, we need a new campaign. The primary objectives should be the chemical and mineralogical characterization of the local vessels and the distinction between local production and importations from Volterra. This is a very important point, mostly because of the amount of vessels from Volterra in Adria and the supposed role of Adria as a hub for the distribution of these vessels in Northern Italy [16], and more doubtfully in the area of the Roman *Ager Gallicus* [17]. In other words,

the quality of the vases should not be the primary standard for the distinction of the productions. Moreover, a new campaign could bring a new perspective to the economical and productive relationship between Adria and Spina during the 4th and the 3rd century BCE [18].

Another main aspect of our research is the analysis of the vessels in context, which brought us new perspectives primarily on the role of pottery as a marker of cultural significance. The insight into cultural pressures which bring potters to create a new vase or to change an existing one could bring about a better understanding of certain special vases. A significant example is the 'fish plate' [19]. During this century, a local production of fish plates in gray clay without external gloss (accurate reproductions of imported Athenian vessels) started in Spina [20]. Towards the end of the century, we observe an interruption in both the importation of plates from Athens and the spread of a local black glazed production. However, the local black glazed fish plates do not blindly reproduce the Athenian prototype as in the gray clay technique: the foot is narrower and the lip is generally shorter and more oblique [21].

The peculiarities of the vase led some scholars to relate it to a production of fish plates in Volterra dated between the last decades of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd century BCE [22]. Except for some remarkable differences, elements such as the coherence of the contexts, the funerary rite and especially the end of the Spina necropoleis within the last decades of the 3rd century BCE do not coincide with this dating. Nevertheless, we do not need to look around for comparisons in Italy, Greece or elsewhere, but we must also look at the context. The study of the documents related to the excavation of the necropolis brings to light that the fish plate was used as the lid of great skyphoi, which could contain food offerings, too [23]. This is a peculiarity of the funerary ritual of the later inhabitants of Spina. Therefore, if we think of the fish plate as the lid of the skyphos, then we can better understand the profile of its special lip.

Another example presents Spina's role in the study of Hellenistic black glazed pottery in a wider Mediterranean context: the Etruscan bowl with a thickened lip, better known as Form Morel 83. This bowl is traditionally dated between the second half of the 4th century to the 2nd century BCE, and it is one of the most common vases in Northern Etruria and the Etruscan Po Valley in this period [24]. The recent study of the black glazed pottery from House 1 of the *Regio IV, insula 2* in ancient *Kainua*, based on archaeometrical analyses, actually shows that the prototype of this bowl

was already produced in the Etruscan Po Valley and in Northern Etruria within the second half of the 5th century BCE [25]. In this first phase, the external profile of the foot of the bowl had a more irregular profile, which lasted until the middle of the 4th century BCE after which its surfaces became smoother. This passage is well documented in the Etruscan and Celtic necropolis of Monte Tamburino [26].

The situation in Tyrrhenian Etruria is harder to understand due to the general poverty of investigated contexts and a more traditional interpretation of the findings [27]. These considerations lead us to formulate another question: which is the archetype of this shape? We probably have to search the late Archaic period and look at both the Athenian stemmed dish and the archaic Etruscan bowl with a thickened lip, whose elements were combined by Etruscan potters with the irregular profile of the Athenian stemless cups (also reproduced by Etruscans) [28]. However, during the second half of the 5th century BCE, the chrono-morphological line of the Form Morel 83 crossed with another line, the one of the Athenian bowl with an outturned rim. It is common knowledge that the outturned rim bowl was widely dispersed in the Mediterranean world during the 4th century BCE, but the starting phase of its chronotypological sequence is not very clear by looking at the Athenian agorà, where few examples are documented [29]. Spina is instead a vantage point for studying this sequence in the passage between 5th and 4th century BCE. We could suppose that the production of a new kind of bowl, originating from the Athenian single handle bowl deprived of the handle, started within the second quarter of the 5th century BCE [30]. The bowl created thanks to this innovation was widely traded only along the western coast of the Adriatic Sea, and mainly in Spina [31]. The main reason for this success could be its similarity with the most common Etruscan bowl [32]. This is not an isolated case in Spina: the stemmed plates [33] also demonstrate this phenomenon, namely by the request, most likely driven by the consumers, of an Athenian black glazed vessel very similar in shape to the Etruscan one. The bowl was thus produced in Athens, as archaeometrical analyses have documented [34], exclusively for an Adriatic market, and silhouettes of wheels, kantharoi, amphoras, and dolphins were drawn on many of them: meaningful figures which await a detailed study. In the second half of the century, the Etruscan black glazed bowl was very similar to the Athenian bowl with outturned rim. Only at the beginning of the 4th century BCE did these bowls take two different routes: in the Etruscan world it continued its evolution towards the Form Morel 83, while in the Greek world it became the common

outturned rim bowl with a huge demand in the Spanish market. Now, we are forced to ask one more question: how deep is the role of Spina and the cities of the Etruscan Po Valley in the sequence of changes which brought us to the Form Morel 83? Only more detailed studies in the territories of Northern Etruria could offer useful data to solve this problem.

Definitively, this synthesis confirms that only through a systematic and multi-disciplinary approach in the study of pottery can we lay the foundations on which we will build an updated typological framework of the black glazed pottery of the Etruscan Po Valley and the Northern Adriatic Sea. This ambitious goal is necessary due to the significant scarcity of documentation about this area in J.P. Morel's work [35], which remains the most useful structure for a typology of black glazed pottery. However, it can't be achieved without a larger chronological perspective starting from the Late Archaic period, in order to understand the models and possible accidents. In this way, the typological study must involve all productions without chronological restrictions starting from the Athenian pottery, which currently lacks a decisive typology [36].

Bibliography

Berti – Guzzo 1993

F. Berti - P.G. Guzzo (ed.), Spina. Storia di una città tra Greci ed Etruschi, Catalogo della Mostra, Ferrara 26 settembre 1993-15 maggio 1994 (Ferrara 1993)

Baldoni 2009

V. Baldoni, La ceramica attica dagli scavi ottocenteschi di Marzabotto (Bologna 2009)

Bonomi 1997

S. Bonomi, I vasi alto-adriatici di Adria, in: F. Berti - S. Bonomi - M. Landolfi (ed.), Classico e Anticlassico. Vasi alto-adriatici tra Piceno Spina e Adria, Catalogo della Mostra, Comacchio 25 giugno 1996 – 6 gennaio 1997 (San Giovanni in Persiceto 1996) 51-58

Cerchiai - Maggiani 2011

L. Cerchiai - A. Maggiani, La casa etrusca. A proposito di: E. Govi - G. Sassatelli (ed.), Marzabotto. La Casa 1 della Regio IV - insula 2, I. Lo scavo, II. I materiali, Ocnus 19, 2011, 193-204

Curti 2002

F. Curti, Presenze di stemmed plates attici a figure rosse nell'Adriatico, Padusa XXXVII, 2002, 161-173

Fabrini 1984

G.M. Fabrini, Numana: vasi attici da collezioni (Roma 1984)

Gaucci 2010

A. Gaucci, La ceramica etrusca figurata e a vernice nera, in: E. Govi - G. Sassatelli (ed.), Marzabotto. La Casa 1 della Regio IV - Insula 2, 2. I materiali (Bologna 2010) 45-76

Gaucci 2015

A. Gaucci, Organizzazione degli spazi funerari a Spina e in area deltizia con particolare riguardo al periodo tardo-arcaico, in: G. Della Fina (ed.), La delimitazione dello spazio funerario in Italia dalla

protostoria all'età arcaica. Recinti, circoli, tumuli, Atti del XXII Convegno Internazionale di studi sulla Storia e l'Archeologia dell'Etruria, Orvieto 19-21 dicembre 2014 (Roma 2015) 113-170

Gaucci 2016

A. Gaucci, La fine di Spina e Adria etrusche, in: E. Govi (ed.), Il mondo etrusco e il mondo italico di ambito settentrionale prima dell'impatto con Roma (IV – II sec. a.C.), Atti del Convegno dell'Istituto di Studi Etruschi ed Italici - Sezione Etruria padana e Italia settentrionale, Bologna 28 febbraio - 1 marzo 2013 (Roma 2016) 171-221

Gaucci et alii 2014

A. Gaucci - V. Minguzzi – G. Gasparotto - E. Zantedeschi, Ceramiche a vernice nera della necropoli etrusca di Valle Trebba. Dati archeologici e archeometrici, Padusa L, 2014, 191-215

Gaucci et alii in press

A. Gaucci - V. Minguzzi - G. Gasparotto - E. Zantedeschi, La ceramica etrusca a vernice nera di Valle Trebba: osservazioni preliminari e primi dati delle analisi archeometriche, in: L'abitato etrusco di Spina. Nuove prospettive di ricerca, Atti del Convegno, Zurigo 4-5 maggio 2012, in press

Gliozzo - Memmi Turbanti 2002

E. Gliozzo - I. Memmi Turbanti, Black gloss pottery: production sites and technology in Northern Etruria, part I: provenance studies, Archaeometry 46, 2, 2004, 201-225

Govi 1999

E. Govi, Le ceramiche attiche a vernice nera di Bologna (Bologna 1999)

Govi 2003

E. Govi, Ceramiche etrusche figurate dal sepolcreto della Certosa di Bologna, StEtr LXIX, 2003, 43-70

Govi 2006

E. Govi, L'"ultima" Spina. Riflessioni sulla tarda etruscità adriatica, in: F. Lenzi (ed.), Rimini e l'adriatico nell'età delle guerre puniche, Atti del Convegno, Rimini 25-27 marzo 2004 (Rimini 2006) 111-135

Govi in press

E. Govi, Il progetto di ricerca sulla necropoli di Valle Trebba. Qualche spunto di riflessione', in: L'abitato etrusco di Spina. Nuove prospettive di ricerca, Atti del Convegno, Zurigo 4-5 maggio 2012, in press

Knigge 2005

U. Knigge, Der Bau Z, Kerameikos XVII, 1-2 (München 2005)

Landolfi 1992

M. Landolfi, Numana e le necropoli picene: le tombe 225 e 407 dell'area Davanzali di Sirolo, in: La civiltà picena nelle Marche. Studi in onore di Giovanni Annibaldi, Ancona, 10-13 luglio 1988 (Ripatransone 1992) 302-330

Macellari 2002

R. Macellari, Il sepolcreto etrusco nel terreno Arnoaldi di Bologna (550-350 a.C.), 1-2 (Venezia 2002)

Mangani 1980

E. Mangani, Materiali volterrani ad Adria in età preromana, StEtr XLVIII, 1980, 121-140

Mangani 1982

E. Mangani, Adri (Rovigo). Necropoli in loc. Ca' Garzoni. prima campagna di scavo, 1966, NS XXXVI, 5-107

Mattioli 2013

C. Mattioli, Atlante tipologico delle forme ceramiche di produzione locale in Etruria padana (Bologna 2013)

Mazzeo et alii 2007

L. Mazzeo Saracino - M.C. Nannetti - M. Zaccaria, Ceramica a vernice nera volterrana da una "domus" repubblicana di "Suasa" (AN), Picus 27, 2007, 181-209

Memmi Turbanti 2004

I. Memmi Turbanti, Pottery production and distribution: the contribution of mineralogical and petrographical methodologies in Italy. State of the art and future developments, *Periodico di Mineralogia* 73, 2004, 239-257

McPhee - Trendall 1987

I. McPhee - A.D. Trendall, Greek red-figured fish-plates, *AntK, Beiheft XIV* (Basel 1987)

Montagna Pasquinucci 1972

M. Montagna Pasquinucci, La ceramica a vernice nera del Museo Guarnacci di Volterra, *MEFRA* 84, 269-498

Morel 1981

J.-P. Morel, *Céramique campanienne: les formes*, 1-2 (Roma 1981)

Morpurgo 2013

G. Morpurgo, La ceramica grigia, in: *Mattioli 2013*, 377-488

Muggia 2004

A. Muggia, Impronte nella sabbia: tombe infantili e di adolescenti dalla necropoli di Valle Trebba a Spina (Firenze 2004)

Nannetti et alii 2010

M.C. Nannetti - V. Minguzzi - E. Zantedeschi - E. Esquilini, Le analisi archeometriche, in: E. Govi - G. Sassatelli (ed.), *Marzabotto. La Casa 1 della Regio IV - Insula 2, 2. I materiali* (Bologna 2010) 421-437

Paoli - Parrini 1988

L. Paoli - A. Parrini, Corredi di età ellenistica dalla necropoli di Spina (Ferrara 1988)

Parrini 2008

A. Parrini, La ceramica a vernice nera, in: D. Vitali - S. Verger (ed.), *Tra mondo celtico e mondo italico. La necropoli di Monte Bibele, Atti della Tavola Rotonda, Roma 3-4 ottobre 1997* (Bologna 2008) 95-126

Sassatelli 1993

G. Sassatelli, La funzione economica e produttiva: merci, scambi, artigianato, in: *Berti - Guzzo 1993* 179-219

Sparkes - Talcott 1970

B.A Sparkes - L. Talcott, *Black and plain pottery of the 6th, 5th and 4th century B.C.*, *Agorà* 12, 1-2, Princeton

Tamassia 1993

K. Tamassia, La necropoli preromana di Adria, loc. Retratto-Donà, *Padusa* XXIX, 7-90

[1] For a synthesis, see Govi 1999, 172; Baldoni 2009, 245. In the late Archaic period few black-figured vases produced in the Northern Etruria arrived through Apennines: Govi 2003.

[2] Gaucci 2010; Gaucci et alii 2014.

[3] Cf. Macellari 2002, 118; Govi 2003, 61-65.

[4] Gaucci 2010, 47-51.

[5] Govi 2006, 111-113.

[6] Sassatelli 1993, 214-216; Govi 2006, 113-115.

[7] Adria was the main trade center in that period (cf. Mangani 1980; Mangani 1982, 100-101; Tamassia 1993, 56-60).

[8] Gaucci 2016, 174-179.

[9] Cf. Gaucci 2016, 173.

[10] Gliozzo - Memmi Turbanti 2002, 202; Memmi Turbanti 2004, 245.

[11] Nannetti et alii 2010, 421-429.

[12] Gaucci 2015; Govi in press.

[13] Gaucci et alii 2014.

[14] Gaucci et alii 2014, 197-198.

- [15] Mazzeo et alii 2007, 200-203.
- [16] Gaucci 2016, 199, note 111.
- [17] Mazzeo et alii 2007, 197-198.
- [18] Bonomi 1997, 53 (Alto-Adriatica figured vases); Gaucci 2016, 195-196 (black glazed pottery).
- [19] Sparkes - Talcott 1970, 147-148; McPhee - Trendall 1987, 56.
- [20] Morpurgo 2013, 428.
- [21] J.-P. Morel defines «plats à poisson proprement dits» the séries 1112-1124 and some vases in séries 1125-1126 (Morel 1981, 82), namely plates with central depression and overhanging rim (cf. Sparkes - Talcott 1970, 147). However, the group of the fish plates in the Spinetic production is more articulated with a lot of variants.
- [22] Paoli - Parrini 1988, p. 16, nn. 14-15; Muggia 2004, 146.
- [23] Gaucci 2016, 180-181.
- [24] The characteristic of the externally distinct rim, or more properly externally thickened rim (Morel 2537c1 and 2536b1: Morel 1981, 180, pl. 53), it is proper to refer generally to the Form 83, introduced by J.P. Morel for the ceramics of Arezzo (Morel, 1963, 45) and then taken up by M. Montagna Pasquinucci for those of Volterra (Montagna Pasquinucci 1972, 373). However, it is quite common the reference to Form 83 and espèce Morel 2536 also for those bowls with groove underneath the rim, which would otherwise fall within the espèce Morel 2560 (cf. Parrini 2008, 96-97, with other references), thus recognizing the close formal relationship between them.
- [25] Gaucci 2010, 50; Gaucci et alii in press.
- [26] Parrini 2008, 96-98.
- [27] Gaucci et alii in press.
- [28] Gaucci 2010, 49-50.
- [29] Sparkes - Talcott 1970, 129; Knigge 2005, Abb. 41.
- [30] Gaucci et alii in press.
- [31] Bologna and Spina: R. Macellari in Govi 1999, 140-142; Numana: Fabrini 1984, 78-79, 116; Landolfi 1992, 319.
- [32] Form I/II, 1, c/d in Mattioli 2013, 103, 111-112.
- [33] Curti 2002, 164-165.
- [34] Gaucci 2014.
- [35] Morel 1981.
- [36] For the study of the Etruscan black glazed pottery in Marzabotto, see the considerations of L. Cerchiai in Cerchiai - Maggiani 2011, 201-202.

© Andrea Gaucci

e-mail: andreagaucci@gmail.com

This article should be cited like this: A. Gaucci, The Black Glazed Pottery in the Etruscan Cities of the Po Valley: Productions and Methodological Issues, *Forum Archaeologiae* 83/VI/2017 (<http://farch.net>).