

Migration of Athenian Potters and Painters in the Late 5th Century BC

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The paper focuses on the migration of Athenian potters and painters who in the light of the socio-economic crisis caused by the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) left Athens in order to find new employments in various regions of Greece. The intervention in social and economic structures brought about by the integration of the migrated artisans in existing or re-established workshops will be illuminated. The craftsmen introduce into their new homes, however, not only themselves, but moreover their expertise. In the present example, this is red-figure vase painting. Since the invention of the red-figure technique in the late 6th century BC in the Athenian Kerameikos red-figure ceramics were distributed into the entire Mediterranean region exclusively by Athenian traders for more than three generations. It was not until the second half of the 5th century that the technique was adopted by workshops in other regions.¹ The most famous are the extensive productions in southern Italy, Falerii and Etruria. But also in the Greek motherland smaller productions arose, for example in Boeotia, on Euboea, on the Peloponnese in Corinth, Laconia and Elis, on the Chalkidiki, in Macedonia, in northwestern Greece and on Crete.

On the basis of the Boeotian red-figure pottery, it is possible to exemplify the ways, in which indigenous decoration schemes were combined with the red-figure technique, which was presumably introduced by migrated craftsmen. There are vases, for example, which are decorated on one side with black-figure floral elements that are common in Boeotian vase painting, and on the other side with a motif carried out in red-figure technique.² Other red-figure vases show a drawing in an atticising manner on one side, while the other side is painted in the style of the Boeotian Kabiria Group.³

In Olympia, it seems that red-figure pottery was used, above all, as part of public dining by the visitors of the sanctuary.⁴ Attic red-figure finds can be dated from the late 6th century BC until the 4th century BC, while its dissemination began to decrease in the late 5th century BC, when local workshops started to adopt the red-figure technique and to satisfy the demands with locally manufactured vessels. A direct comparison of motifs and shapes of Attic red-figure ceramic finds with those of the locally made ceramics shows how in this case the Attic imports were gradually replaced by local products and finally dried up almost completely.

The so-called Suessula Painter, named by Beazley due to the discovery of a series of painted amphorai in Suessula in Campania, is best known for his Attic red-figure vases.⁵ His creative period can be dated into the last two decades of the 5th century and the first decade of the 4th century BC. In addition to his Attic works, however, there are also Corinthian red figured vases that can be assigned to his hand.⁶ Ceramic tests carried out in 2003 confirm the Corinthian origin of these vases.⁷ Supported by philological indi-

cations, derived from a graffito on the underside of a vase by the painter's hand, it can be argued that the Suessula Painter was a Corinthian, who learned his craft in Athens, then returned home, but probably due to the limited demand on the local market, he migrated to Athens again.⁸

Finally, the motivation behind the migration of the craftsmen shall be considered.⁹ In some cases, artisans may just have been co-migrated, for example in the course of the colonization of southern Italy or those who followed the sculptor Phidias to Olympia when he started to work on the Statue of Zeus.¹⁰ Since, however, the productions began in most cases in the time of the Peloponnesian War, a close connection cannot be denied. Craftsmen who suffered from the stagnating production volume that occurred due to the socio-economic crisis caused by the war may have tried to find their luck in other places, while others who lived as metics in Athens may have been obliged to leave the city.¹¹

Notes

¹ On locally produced red-figure pottery outside Attica, see Schierup – Sabetai 2014 with further reference.

² Mannheim, Reiss-Museum Cg 142, cf. CVA Mannheim (1) pl. 12, 1. 2. 4.

³ Athens, Nationalmuseum 1406, cf. Sabetai 2012, 90 fig. 11.

⁴ Cf. Bentz 2012, 105–107; Bentz 2009, 14–16.

⁵ On the Suessula Painter in general, see ARV² 1344–1346. 1691; Beazley, Para. 482; Beazley, Addenda 367 f.; McPhee 1973, 161–207.

⁶ Corinth C-1937-445, cf. Herbert 1977, 48 No. 77; Corinth C-1937-447, cf. Herbert 1977, 47 f. No. 76.

⁷ Cf. McPhee – Kartsonaki 2010.

⁸ Cf. McPhee – Kartsonaki 2010, 136 note 49; Pemberton 1997, 417; for a drawing of the graffito on the column-krater Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional 11045, cf. CVA Madrid (2) III I D 7 Taf. 11, 1 a. b.

⁹ For a brief discussion, see MacDonald 1981.

¹⁰ Cf. Mallwitz – Schiering 1964, 248 f.

¹¹ Xen. Hell. 2, 3, 21 refers to a decision made by the Thirty Tyrants that in order to pay the members of the occupying spartan forces metics shall be put to death, while their property is confiscated.

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