

# ABSTRACT

The starting point for the present study is the discovery of a Hellenistic well within the Sanctuary of Apollo Daphnephoros at Eretria in 2000, during excavations conducted by the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece. The finds from the well, mainly pottery, together with some bone remains, seem to be homogeneous and are probably the remnants of dining activities in the immediate surroundings of the Sanctuary, or even within its boundaries.

The main objective consisted in analysing the twenty nine pottery items from the well, some of them almost complete, others very fragmented. Twenty six of the vases belong to the category of fine or table wares: one *krateriskos*, thirteen mould-made and relief-decorated bowls, six bowls or plates, one fish-plate, one *dinos*, one amphora, one jug and two *unguentaria*. Three of the items are of coarse ware, used for preparation, storing or transportation of food or beverages: one cooking pot, one jug and one bowl. All these items are presented in a catalogue (A), followed by two more catalogues (B and C), containing comparative material that was examined in detail.

The iconographic and morphological analysis of some pieces helps us to better understand the somewhat complex relations between the different production centres of mould-made bowls. Firstly, we should point out that two of the thirteen mould-made bowls discovered belong to the category of the so-called Homeric bowls, decorated with mythological scenes, more precisely with a shortened version of Œdipus' childhood and a gigantomachy. If the latter identification is correct, this would be the first representation of a gigantomachy on a mould-made bowl, while the childhood of Œdipus has an excellent parallel on a bowl at the Musée du Louvre in Paris.

The human representations as well as the vegetal ornaments of the mould-made bowls allow comparison of the different stamps used for their decoration and, therefore, the establishment of generations and connections between different productions. The origin of most of our thirteen mould-made bowls can be situated within continental Greece, possibly in northern Greece. More precise localisations are as yet out of reach. Three items certainly belong to the workshop of the Monogram, situated at Ephesos in Asia Minor. Generally, the different provenances are the basis for some further reflections concerning commercial and economic structures during the Hellenistic period.

The chronology of the finds from the Eretrian well can be established by analysing both comparative single pieces and

similar contexts, namely from northern and central Greece as well as from Asia Minor (in particular Pergamon). This analysis confirms the homogeneity of our corpus and situates it within the second quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

The analysis of the two Homeric bowls gives way to further thoughts about their iconographic prototypes. Some iconographic connections with statuary are evident. Since Hellenistic sculpture itself combines innovative solutions with older prototypes, an eventual connection with the decoration of mould-made bowls becomes difficult to establish. Nevertheless, several figures on mould-made bowls seem to be directly based on specific statuary prototypes of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, while others would suggest an influence by prototypes from the 5<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and even 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC.

These conclusions, together with the so far complete absence of prototypes in metal for the Homeric bowls, lead to a reconsideration of the ways of transmitting iconographic schemes on the one hand and shapes of vases on the other hand across centuries and regions. With these parameters in mind, we suggest that the northeastern regions of the Balkans would have played a key role as a melting pot of different influences coming from Greece, Persia, Thrace and Scythia, therefore giving way to the creation of new iconographic types and shapes of objects.

The last chapter deals with the contextual interpretation of the Eretrian finds. The analysis of the contents of the well, especially featuring one *krateriskos* together with thirteen mould-made bowls, allows us to point out some changes within the organisation of Hellenistic feasts (*symposia*), compared to their Archaic and Classic forerunners.

We also deal with the issue of banqueting installations within the *temenos* of the Sanctuary of Apollo. In particular, we propose to identify as banqueting installations some of the early Iron Age buildings in the Sanctuary, as well as a Hellenistic edifice, located to the west of the Temple. The existence of these installations seems to speak in favour of real *hestiatoria* within the boundaries of the Sanctuary.

Finally, the presence of several imported objects in the well leads to consider Eretria's commercial exchanges during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. It appears that commercial activities tended to be re-oriented towards Asia Minor, penalizing, for instance, older networks with Athens.