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## Corinthian Roman Relief Bowls from "Acrae", Prov. Syracuse, South-Eastern Sicily

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## CORINTHIAN ROMAN RELIEF BOWLS FROM *ACRAE*, PROV. SYRACUSE, SOUTH-EASTERN SICILY

**Keywords:** *Acrae*, battle scene, ceramic, Dionysian-themed images, relief bowls

### Introduction

The ancient town of *Acrae* (present-day Palazzolo Acreide) was established by Syracuse as a colony named *Akraï/Akraï* in 664/663 BC. The town was dependent on the metropolis in political, cultural or economic contexts. For almost or over a century it acted merely as a guardian at Syracuse's borders, which is explained by its military and strategic location. Up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC, the town had a marginal significance, while about the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC, at the time of the rule of the Syracusan tyrant Hieron II, an intensive development began (BERNABÒ BREA 1956; CHOWANIEC 2013). After the Roman conquest of Sicily in 241 BC, and subsequently, with the establishment of Sicily as the first Roman province in 227 BC and the defeat of Syracuse in 212 BC, *Acrae* was mentioned on the list of *stipendiariae civitates*, i.e., towns paying tribute to Rome (CHOWANIEC, MISIEWICZ 2010). Archaeological evidence to confirm the functioning of the town in the long period between 212 BC and the Byzantine era is not well explored.<sup>1</sup> Once more, the town is mentioned as a centre of Christianity in eastern Sicily, second only to Syracuse, which is documented by several necropolises located in unused quarries or close to the town (ORSI 1931; PUGLIESE CARRATELLI 1953; DISTEFANO 2002).

Since 2009 new archaeological investigations have been carried out in *Acrae*, thanks to the cooperation between the Soprintendenza dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Siracusa, authorised by Dr Beatrice Basile and Dr Rosa Lanteri, and the University of Warsaw. The studies have aimed at exploring the history of this Graeco-Roman urban centre and widening our knowledge about its inhabitants,

along with their economic and cultural connections, as inferred from material findings supplementing hitherto scarce information provided by written sources (CHOWANIEC, MISIEWICZ 2010). The archaeological excavations (2011–2014)<sup>2</sup> were concentrated on exploring and studying Late Roman and Byzantine strata, which covered destruction and levelling layers. Secondary strata were clearly visible in architectural remains, built with re-used blocks and construction elements. They copied and duplicated more or less faithfully earlier foundations of a Late Hellenistic–Early Roman residential complex (Fig. 1) (CHOWANIEC 2015b).

So far, the excavations yielded an immense amount of artefacts witnessing a virtually uninterrupted continuance of the town from the 7<sup>th</sup> c. BC to at least the 7<sup>th</sup> c. AD (CHOWANIEC, WIĘCEK, GUZZARDI 2014; CHOWANIEC 2015). Amongst the abounding collection of varied artefacts, items of everyday use were discovered, for example jewellery, coins, lamps or pottery. In addition to locally or regionally produced vessels, plentiful pottery assemblages<sup>3</sup> contained imports from, i.a., Pantelleria, North Africa, Gaul, workshops of Etruria and Campania, as well as Aegean thin-walled pottery from the western part of Asia Minor or Knidian relief bowls (DOMŻALSKI 2015; MŁYNARCZYK 2015; WICENCIAK 2015). The presence of each category of imports in assemblages depends on the chronological framework of a given stratum.

### Corinthian Roman relief bowls – general characteristics

Corinthian Roman relief bowls are commonly found throughout the Mediterranean, especially around the Adriatic Sea (MALFITANA 2007: 148, fig. 73) and its northern coasts. The majority, i.e., 32.2% of all the findings

<sup>1</sup> Interests in the ancient town have a long and rich history. The discovery of *Acrae* occurred in several stages, which seems to illustrate the European way from antiquary and historical studies to modern archaeology (JUDICA 1819; ORSI 1891; BERNABÒ BREA 1956; CHOWANIEC, REKOWSKA 2013).

<sup>2</sup> The archaeological excavations were financed by the Polish National Science Centre (No. UMO–2011/03/B/HS3/00567) and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (SPUB

4815/E–343/SPUB/2014/2–1).

<sup>3</sup> The study of pottery from *Acrae* is based on the methods created by Dr Urszula Wicenciak and Dr Krzysztof Domżałski. In excavation seasons 2011–2013 only diagnostic sherds (rim/body/handle) were collected, because of exploration of surface and mixed layers. In 2014 the method was modified and all fragments of pottery were collected (both diagnostic and non-diagnostic ones).

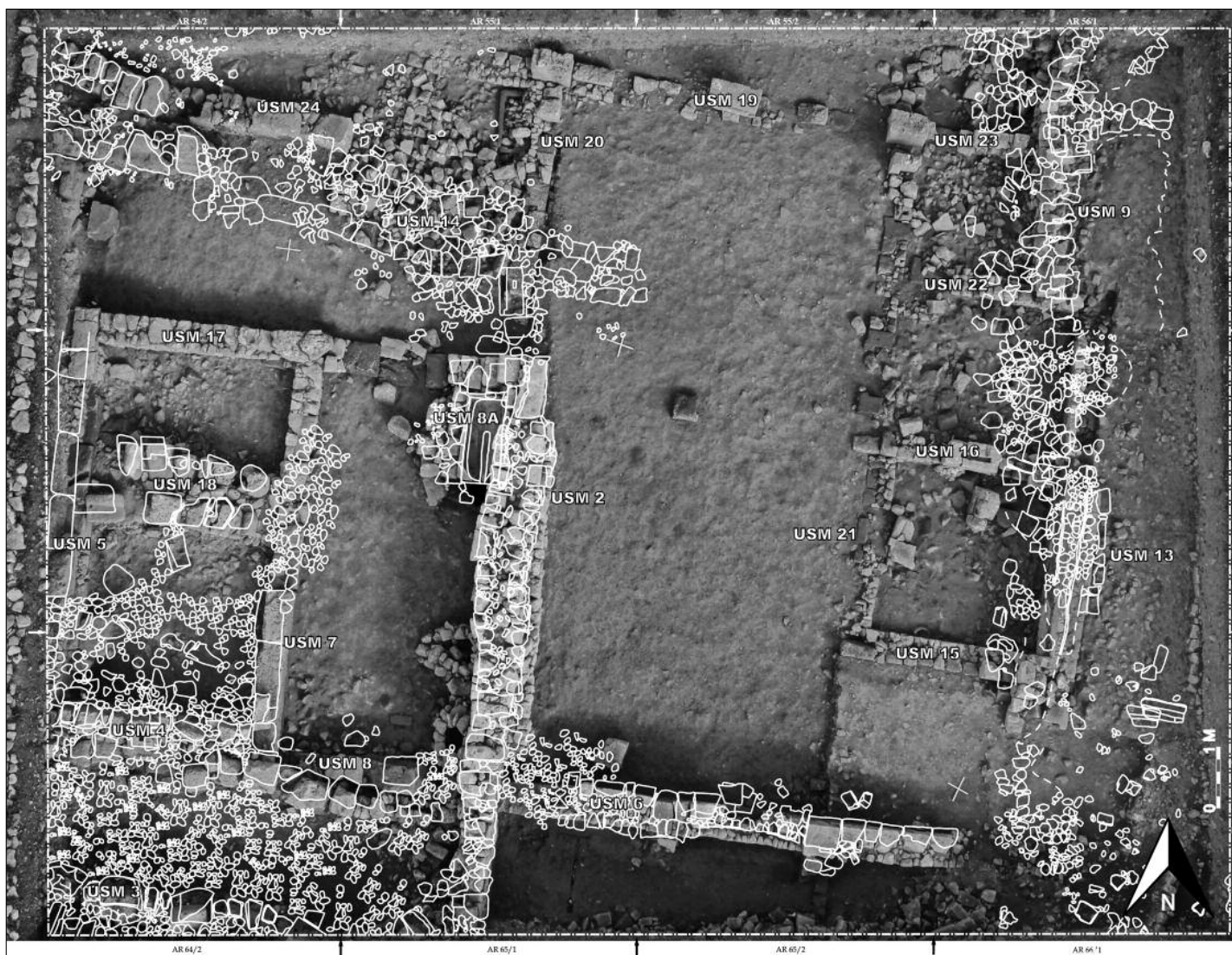


Fig. 1. Aerial photo and plan of Trench I with a Late Hellenistic–Early Roman residential complex and Late Roman and Byzantine features (white contours). Status from the end of 2014. USM – Unità Stratigrafica Muraria – Structure Stratigraphic Unit (Photo M. Bogacki, drawing R. Chowaniec).

Ryc. 1. Fotografia lotnicza i plan wykopu nr I z późnohellenistyczno-wczesnorzymskim kompleksem mieszkalnym oraz konstrukcjami późnorzymskimi i bizantyjskimi (białe kontury). Stan na koniec 2014 r. USM – Unità Stratigrafica Muraria – Stratygraficzna Jednostka Strukturalna.

comes from Apulia (Fig. 2). In older literature this type of vase was called a “Homeric bowl” and was very often confused with Megarian bowls (PAVOLINI 1980: 241; *ATLANTE I*: 255). A fundamental study on this type of pottery was done by Doreen C. Spitzer (1942) based on finds from Corinth with analogies from, i.a., Athens, Melos, Tanagra, Alexandria, Pergamon and Rome. A new approach in iconography was provided by Michel Bats (1981). Recently, the studies were expanded and intensified by Daniele Malfitana (2007). Furthermore, numerous papers were published in the meantime, but a majority of publications were related to single finds from archaeological sites or museum collections (i.a., GRANADOS GARCÍA 1977; MANDRUZZATO 2008; MARDEŠIĆ 2009; DE MITRI 2012; HOXHA 2012; MASSÓ, RAMÓN, JÁRREGA 2014).

D. Malfitana worked out a typological division of vessels and distinguished – according to the shapes of their bodies, rims, and bottoms – a total of three basic forms of the Corinthian Roman relief ware. These are then subdivided into types: a hemispherical bowl/*pyxis* – found in the highest number and most widespread; a cup-dish with a short and large body and a *trulla* with a hemispherical body and flat handle (MALFITANA 2007: 40–89).

Because of the shape of their bodies, the Corinthian Roman relief wares were most probably used for preserving ointments, powders or solids. D. Malfitana (2005: 87) names the bowls/*pyxides* as containers for perfumes or ointments, and states that the city of Corinth was famous for the production of iris perfumes. However, he mentioned that archaeometrical studies would be indispensable. Furthermore,

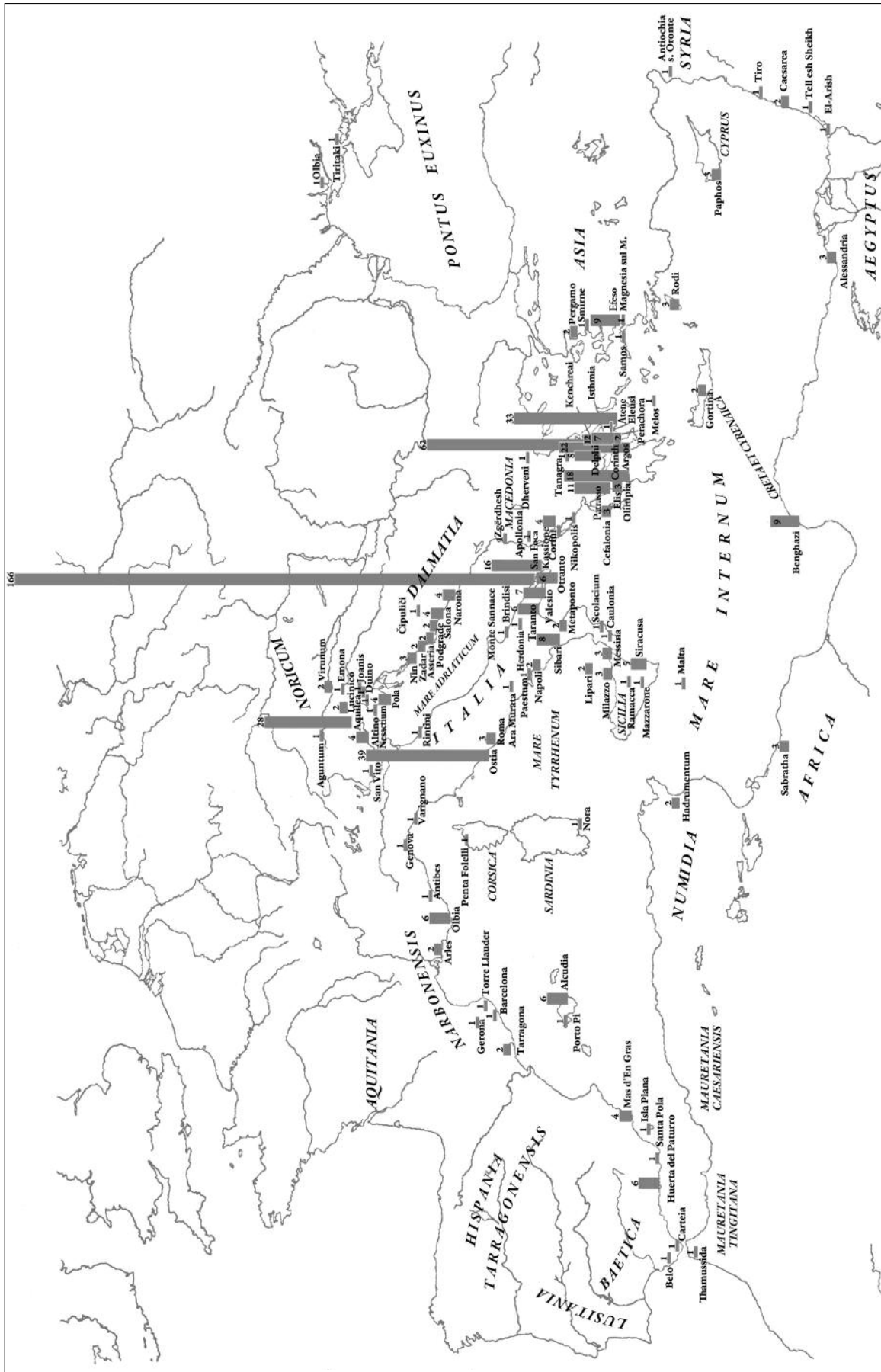


Fig. 2. Distribution map of Corinthian Roman relief bowls (MALETTANA 2007: 149, fig. 74).  
Ryc. 2. Mapa rozrzutu rzymskich reliefowych czarek korynckich.

R. Winkes (2004: 66) suggests, on the basis of Kerkyra finds, that this class of containers could be closed with lids, made of the same clay. The third form, *trulla*, could be used for sprinkling water (MALFITANA 2005: 87). With reference to Corinthian and also Knidian relief wares, J.W. Hayes states: *Both of these occur literally all over the Mediterranean world, but, unlike the sigillata wares just noted, rarely in any great numbers. Should we here be thinking of vessels with special contents, rather than of pots marketed per se?* (HAYES 1996: 9).

Such bowls are called Corinthian since moulds used for their production were found in Corinth (i.a., GRANADOS GARCÍA 1979; WINKES 2004: 54); however, they might have actually been fabricated elsewhere in central Greece, since ca. 28.4% of finds come from Achaia (MALFITANA 2007: 151, table 9; HAYES 2008: 111–112). Besides that, early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, Corinthian workshops established own branches, i.a., in Athens, to produce, for example, Corinthian types of lamps (ENGELS 1990: 35). Therefore, it is believable that relief bowls, particularly those of worse quality, were likewise produced there.

In order to confirm the Corinthian origin of discussed vessels, a series of chemical and petrographic analyses were accomplished. Thanks to them two substantive arguments for the Corinthian origin were obtained. The first one was a similarity of pattern to other coarse wares produced in Corinth. And secondly, the Corinthian origin of pottery was demonstrated by local fabrics,<sup>4</sup> whose mineralogical and chemical composition of clay is distinctive only for the region of Corinth (SCHNEIDER 2007: 142–143; DEGRYSE 2007: 143; MASSÓ, RAMÓN, JÁRREGA 2014: 197).

The most characteristic type of Corinthian Roman relief bowls is cylindrical in shape and predominantly has no handles. It is marked by an elevated ring-shaped foot, almost completely flat, sometimes slightly raised towards the middle of the vessel. Other traits include a subtly thickened straight or rounded rim and nearly vertical bodies decorated with frieze-like ornament made in a fairly deep relief in the central part of the vessel. A central image is separated from the rim and the bottom with mouldings (slightly convex or flat). In some examples, the mouldings adjoining the bottom take a form of a stripe composed of gently raised pearls, dots or lines. The vessels were manufactured in two stages: first in a mould, then finished on a potter's wheel and fitted with a ring-shaped foot. The

relief was pressed with a die and its form undoubtedly derives from metal-ware ornaments.

Commonly, a Corinthian relief bowl was made of well-prepared, painstakingly kneaded and perfectly fired clay, yellowish buff to reddish in colour, sometimes with pinkish or greyish hue (HAYES 1973: 465–466). The slip is normally homogeneously dull red-orange, clearly attesting perfect firing, sometimes showing metallic glow in troughs of the central image, but generally matt, not too glossy. It covers both internal and external surfaces of the vessel as a thin layer. The outer side was slipped by careful dipping, while the inner was painted with a brush, most probably on a potter's wheel (SPITZER 1942: 164, n. 12; for technological details see *ATLANTE I*: 367).

Bowls of this kind are characterised by rich decoration, with motifs well known and popular all over the Roman Empire, but with Greek and Oriental origins. These motifs were classified into seven basic groups by Malfitana<sup>5</sup> (2007: 97–122): 1. scenes from the labours of Hercules; 2. battle scenes, including representations of Greeks fighting against barbarians; 3. Dionysian-themed images; 4. feasts of gods; 5. landscapes; 6. vegetation motifs; 7. "Homeric" scenes. It is necessary to remark that recently a unique bowl decorated only with animal motifs (a sequence of fish and waterfowls) has been discovered (HOXHA 2012: 71–73), but it is not known whether the bowl was produced in the same workshop.

Decorations on vessels were designed in a truly impressionist style, depicting hunting scenes, somewhat formulaic, based on topical iconography, but at the same time rather free as far as manufacturing technique and plasticity of images were concerned (MALFITANA 2006). Many surfaces of the vessels show slight displacement of decorations, which could indicate that particular scenes from the mould were made separately. For example, C. Pavolini proposes that: *punzoni venivano impressi all'interno della matrice senza in ordine preffissato* (PAVOLINI 1980: 245). Moreover, it seems that – except for the decoration showing the labours of Hercules – various scenes are not linked to each other. Sets of motifs are repetitive. Thanks to diverse combinations of a single pattern – probably applied by different pottery-makers – many different sequences of motifs are received. Assuredly, it provides a problem to find identical analogies, therefore looking for a parallel is necessary rather to observe techniques and stylistic combinations than literal parity.

<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, K. Warner Slane distinguished two basic fabrics (a buff and a red one) used in Corinthian pottery workshops in the Roman Period. The buff one was used for fine pottery and plain wares in the first three centuries AD, the red one after the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD. The second fabric often replaced the first one. This

could be seen as evidence of continuation of production in Corinth (WARNER SLANE 2003: 327).

<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Spitzer (1942: 165) divided the scenes into four basic categories: labours of Hercules, battle between Greeks and barbarians, Dionysian scenes, and hunting scenes.

The hitherto conducted research on this category of pottery demonstrated beyond doubt that Corinthian Roman relief bowls were produced from ca. the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD<sup>6</sup> and their production continued until the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c./early 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD reaching its peak in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD<sup>7</sup> (*ATLANTE I*: 255–256; MALFITANA 2000: 184; BUORA 2005: 103; MALFITANA 2007: 135–139).

### Corinthian Roman relief bowls from *Acrae*

During the excavation season of 2014, a total of nine fragments of Corinthian Roman relief bowls of various sizes, including two of minute size<sup>8</sup> and one constituting almost a half of a vessel, were recorded. Although these are very interesting finds, they represent only a small percentage of the entire assemblage of pottery recorded in *Acrae*.

The examples from *Acrae* are alike, characterised by a similar kind of slip and clay. The quality of the clay, slip and the form of the decoration leaves no doubt on the provenience of these vessels. The clay is generally fine-grained and very hard; it is yellowish buff, covered with a sloppily prepared, heavily scratched and matt orange-red slip.

However, a closer macroscopic analysis enables to distinguish them not only according to slip hues and its varying quality, but most notably by the shape of their rims and type of decoration. Unfortunately, the ornamentation of most fragments is poorly preserved and many of the scenes can be hardly recognised.

All the fragments were discovered at the same location, within the stratigraphic Layer 21, situated between USM<sup>9</sup> 2, 14, 19 and 21 (**Fig. 1**). The stratum contains heavily diversified and mixed artefacts, dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC through the late of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD/beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD. It is a rubble level, with local lenses of grime and ash, slaked lime mortar, compressed ceramic building material and fragmented masonry blocks coming probably from Walls/USM 13, 16, 21 and 22. Thus the archaeological context is dated stratigraphically, and some artefacts could also be typologically dated.

I do not widely discuss individual decoration motifs presented below, because they were amply described in the literature quoted in this paper.

### Catalogue of finds

#### 1. Fragment of a bowl/*pyxis* (Figs. 3, 4)

Inv. No. AK14/I/21-250

Type: similar to Form 1, Type 2 according to Malfitana (2007: 45–46).<sup>10</sup>

Dimensions: rim diameter 13 cm; bottom diameter 8 cm; height 6.7 cm.

Clay: yellowish buff fine-grained clay covered with a sloppily prepared, heavily scratched and matt orange-red slip.

Description: body almost vertical, rounded only in its bottom part, where it was gently thickened. The vessel is marked by a thick, crudely manufactured and just slightly rounded rim, bent outwards a little, and a ring-like, chunky bottom raised in its central part. Below the rim there is a moulding tipped with two protruding ribs: a clearly discernible upper one and a lower, much narrower one, which is obscure in places.

The central part has walls decorated with a relief depiction limited from the bottom with a wide and flat rib. The decoration should be ascribed to the so-called Group 2 by Malfitana, i.e., battle scenes (due to some compositions, the battle scene group is also referred to as “the battle of the Amazons,” see HAYES 1997: 73), customarily described as portrayals of combat between Greeks and barbarians (for the interpretation of battle scenes on Corinthian relief bowls see also PERDRIZET 1908: 177–178; COURBY 1922: 443–444; BIEŃKOWSKI 1928: 72–74; SPITZER 1942: 177; PANCIERA 1986: 710; HÖLSCHER 1993: 14–18, 21–30). The analysis of iconography suggests that single scenes were formed with separate moulds. The depictions are situated at different levels, sometimes overlapping each other and the lower moulding. They were made with little care; some characters or details of the portrayal are either completely

<sup>6</sup> The earliest finds so far, dated to the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD, come from graves in Santa Paola (Alicante), Barcelona and Paestum. Some other fragments were discovered in the context of a *villa rustica* in Lucinico, dated to between AD 150 and 200 (MALFITANA 2007: 136).

<sup>7</sup> The chronology is based on well-defined stratigraphic contexts, among others, from Corinth, Patras, Emona, Ostia, and Paestum. In Corinth many fragments of relief bowls were found with lamps of Type Broneer XXVII (BRONEER 1930) and numismatic finds

dated to the period between the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD.

<sup>8</sup> Separated from the mass material in 2013. Due to their minute size they were not included in the present paper.

<sup>9</sup> Unità Stratigrafica Muraria – Structure Stratigraphic Unit, a standard for Italian field documentation.

<sup>10</sup> Some features of the vessel correspond to Type 10 of the same form as well.

indiscernible or just drawn in a too schematic way.

The following scenes<sup>11</sup> appear on the preserved fragment of the vessel (starting from the left):

1. A fragment of a preserved horse rump turned left, in a gallop, with a clearly visible left leg of the rider. A frag-

ment of a tree to the right. Probably related to Scene D or F (in the full version: Scene D – a warrior galloping on a horse towards the left, ready to thrust with his spear, between two cypresses<sup>12</sup> or Scene F – a warrior galloping towards the left).

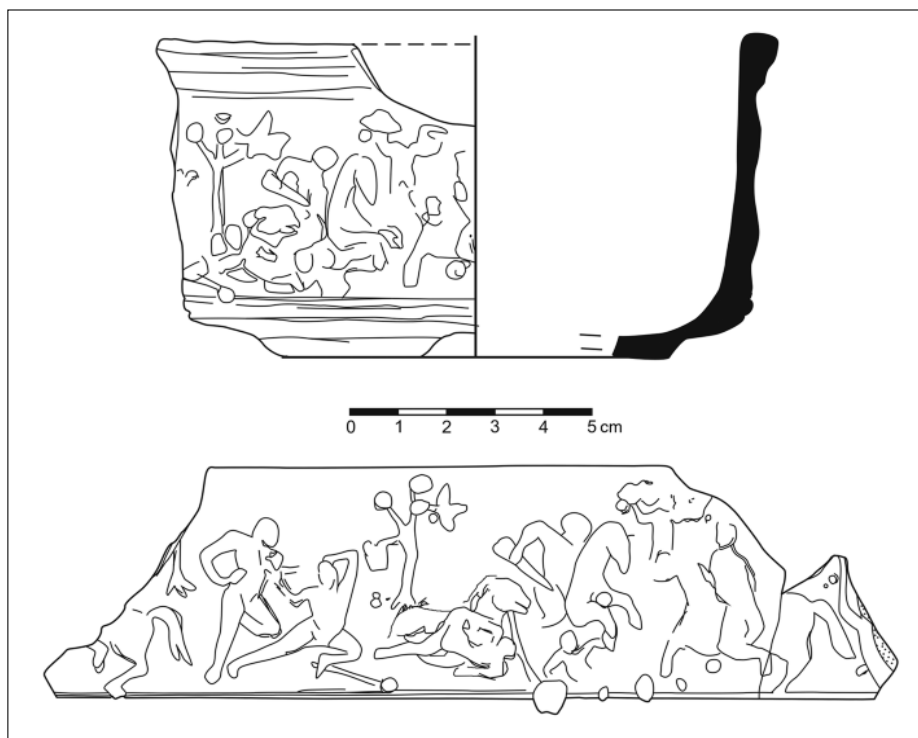


Fig. 3. Bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-250 (Drawing K. Wójcik, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 3. Czarka, nr inw. AK14/I/21-250.



Fig. 4. Photo of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-250 (Photo Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 4. Zdjęcie czarki, nr inw. AK14/I/21-250.

<sup>11</sup> The classification by D. Malfitana (2007: 102–105) has been used for identification of the scenes, with the corresponding capital letters labelling.

<sup>12</sup> According to Spitzer (1942: 173), without the tree or with a single cypress to the right.



2. A warrior to the right, probably wearing a helmet, facing to the right and holding a *pugio*, intending to strike the enemy, while grabbing his hair with the other hand. The other warrior is depicted in a falling position, *en face*, naked with his left hand held on top of his head (while trying to free himself from the enemy) and his right hand ready to parry or push the assailant away. It seems that he leans over his left foot, whereas his right one is stretched completely and directed towards the enemy. Scene N (two persons fighting) (Fig. 5).
3. A silhouette falling from a horse, most probably after a received blow, depicted *en face* with the upper body shown below. His right hand tries to catch the horse, while the left hand is trapped under the body. The horse also faces to the right during the fall, his rear and front legs are bent. The back side of the depiction was not moulded correctly, which resulted in a blurred relief. Scene E (a warrior falling off a horse) (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5. Detail of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-250. Fragment with two fighting warriors (Photo K. Wójcik, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 5. Czarka, nr inw. AK14/I/21-250 – fragment z przedstawieniem dwóch walczących wojowników.



Fig. 6. Detail of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-250. Scene with a silhouette falling from a horse (Photo K. Wójcik, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 6. Czarka, nr inw. AK14/I/21-250 – fragment ze sceną przedstawiającą postać spadającą z konia.



Fig. 7. Detail of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-250. Scene with a warrior on a horse ready to deliver a blow (Photo K. Wójcik, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 7. Czarka, nr inw. AK14/I/21-250. Scena przedstawiająca wojownika na koniu gotowego do zadania ciosu.

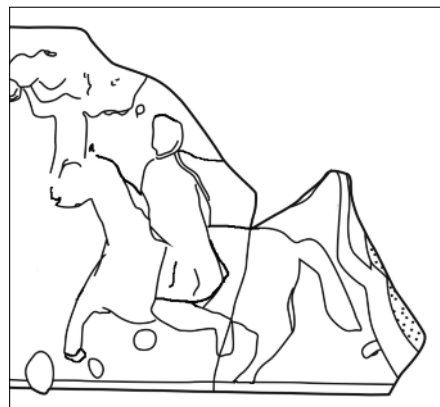


Fig. 8. Detail of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-250. Scene with a horseman galloping to the left (Drawing K. Wójcik, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 8. Czarka, nr inw. AK14/I/21-250. Scena przedstawiająca jeźdźca galopującego w lewo.

4. A character mounted on a galloping horse directed to the right with his head slightly bowed. In his right hand, raised in preparation for a strike, he holds a short sword, but the left hand remains unseen. The back side of the portrayal is poorly moulded, the stamp seems to be twisted to the left too much. Scene K (a mounted warrior ready to deliver a blow) (**Fig. 7**).

5. A horseman galloping to the left. At the top and to the right, trees are depicted. The main relief is crude and overlaps the lower moulding of the vessel. It is probably Scene D or F (in the full version: Scene D – a warrior galloping on a horse towards the left, ready to thrust with his spear, between two cypresses, or Scene F – a mounted warrior galloping towards the left) (**Fig. 8**).

Scenes 1 and 5, depicted on this vessel, are difficult to classify unambiguously as belonging either to the group with Scene D or F according to D. Malfitana. This problem arises from a very poor quality and blurriness of the depicted scenes. What is a key distinguishing feature between Scenes D and F is the presence of cypresses flanking a warrior galloping

towards the left. However, the trees from the *Acrae* specimen do not fit into a general pattern of cypresses' depiction on Corinthian relief ware, more resembling a stylised olive tree or grapevine. The preserved images are composed as follows: D (or F)-N-E-K-D (or F), that is: D: a warrior galloping on a horse towards the left, ready to thrust with his spear, between two cypresses (or F: a mounted warrior galloping towards the left) – N: two persons fighting – E: a warrior falling off a horse – K: a warrior on a horse ready to deliver a blow – D: a warrior galloping on a horse towards the left, ready to thrust with his spear, between two cypresses (or F: a mounted warrior galloping towards the left) (**Fig. 9**). A similar composition is recognised by D. Malfitana in Sequence 4<sup>a</sup> on vessels of Form 1<sup>13</sup> and in Sequence 7<sup>a</sup> also on vessels classified as Form 1.<sup>14</sup>

The remaining fragments of *Acrae* Corinthian relief ware are not so imposing. However, due to their morphological distinctness and decoration type, they deserve to be discussed:

<sup>13</sup> The vessels with catalogue numbers II.4.1 (Tanagra), II.4.2 (Pergamon), II.4.3 (Kassiopi), II.4.4 (Salona), II.4.5 (Kassiopi), II.4.6 (Narona) and II.4.7 (Arish), see MALFITANA 2007: 113.

<sup>14</sup> The vessels with catalogue numbers II.7.1 (Corinth), II.7.2 (Paphos), II.7.3 (Brindisi), II.7.4 (Lucinico), II.7.5 (Athens), II.7.6 (Lucinico), II.7.7 (Aquilaia), II.7.8 (Delphi), see MALFITANA 2007: 114.

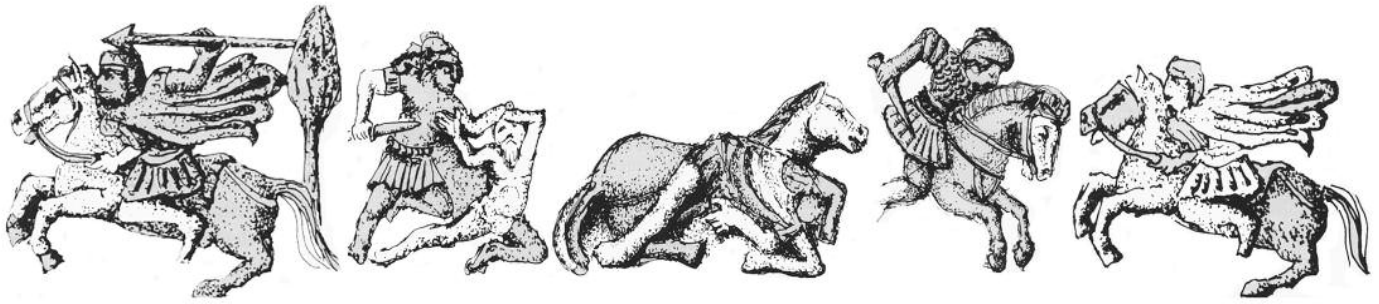


Fig. 9. The sequence of motifs D(or F)-N-E-K-D(or F), which appear on this type of bowl (MALFITANA 2007: 102–105, 113).

Ryc. 9. Sekwencja motywów D(lub F)-N-E-K-D (lub F) występująca na tym typie naczyń.

## 2. Fragment of a bowl (Fig. 10)

Inv. No. AK14/I/21-804a<sup>15</sup>

Type: Form 1 according to Malfitana (2007: 42–87).

Dimensions: rim diameter 12 cm; preserved height 4 cm.

Clay: yellowish buff fine-grained clay covered with a sloppily prepared, heavily scratched and matt orange-red slip.

Description: the decoration belongs to Type 2 with battle scenes; fragment of a rim with preserved decoration interpreted as Scene D (in the full version: Scene D – a warrior galloping on a horse towards the left, ready to thrust with his spear, between two cypresses). A wind-blown *chlamys* and a right hand brandishing a spear can be seen on the preserved fragment.

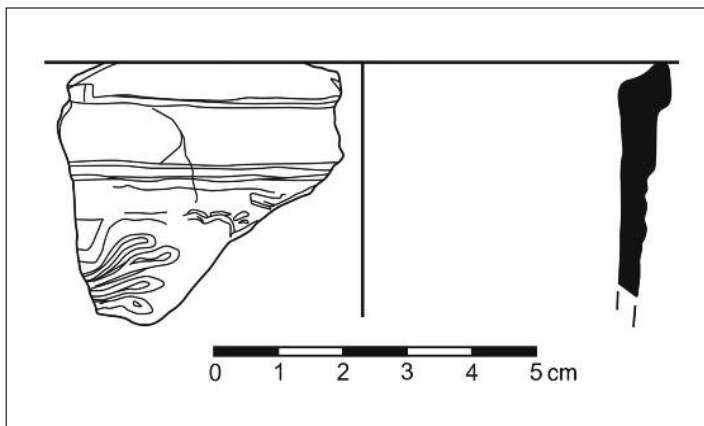


Fig. 10. Fragment of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-804a (Drawing K. Wójcik, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 10. Fragment czarki, nr inw. AK14/I/21-804a.

## 3. Fragment of a bowl (Fig. 11)

Inv. No. AK14/I/21-804b

Type: Form 1, Type 2 according to Malfitana (2007: 45–46).

Dimensions: rim diameter 13 cm; preserved height 4.5 cm.

Clay: light red fine-grained clay with very fine-grained limestone admixture and bilateral red slip.

Description: the decoration belongs to Type 2 with battle scenes; nearly vertical body decorated with diligently copied Scene N

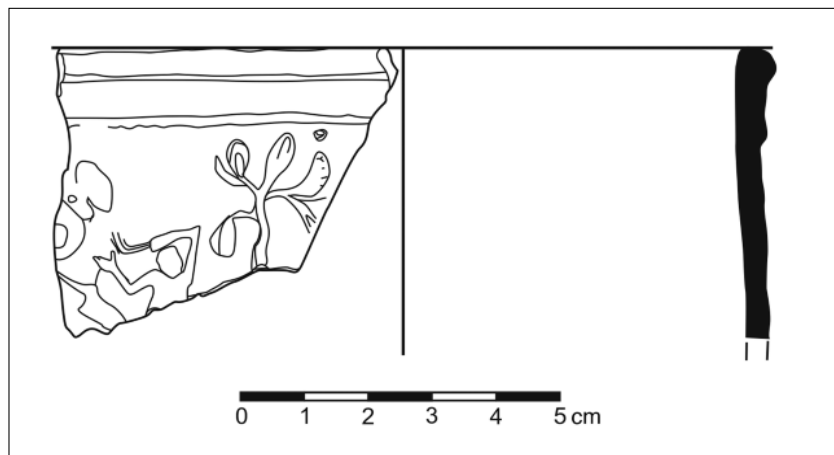


Fig. 11. Fragment of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-804b (Drawing K. Wójcik, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 11. Fragment czarki, nr inw. AK14/I/21-804b.

<sup>15</sup> Despite the similarity to the vessel labeled as AK14/I/21-250, these two fragments cannot be matched together, and therefore

they must have come from two separate specimens.

according to D. Malfitana, i.e., two fighting silhouettes: a warrior to the right, with a helmet, facing towards the right and holding his enemy by hair with his left hand. The other warrior depicted *en face* during a fall. A naked figure, probably bearded, holds its left hand on top of its head (trying to free itself from the enemy), while using the right to stop or push away the assailant (?). A stylised tree to the right of it. The relief was manufactured with utmost precision and diligence.

#### 4. Fragment of a bowl (Fig. 12)

Inv. No. AK14/I/21-803a

Type: Form 1, Type 5 (?) according to Malfitana (2007: 51–53).

Dimensions: rim diameter ca. 8 cm; preserved height 2.6 cm.

Clay: well-prepared yellowish buff – light red fine-grained clay, covered with red slip.

Description: the decoration belongs to Type 3 with Dionysian scenes; the fragment shows the right side of Scene G (a female silhouette wearing a chiton and a himation making an offering), i.e., a part of a column shaft tipped with Dionysus' head. In accordance with the sequence of images No. 19<sup>8</sup> by Malfitana, to the right there is Scene K (initiation), portraying a satyr<sup>16</sup> (*liknophoros*) treading towards the right, securing a *liknon* on his head with the left hand and holding a *thyrsus* in the right one. The discussed fragment has only a *liknon* and an upper part of a *thyrsos* preserved on

it. Floral motifs tipped with volutes (it might be a tree made with vertical meandering lines) can be seen between the two images.<sup>17</sup>

#### 5. Fragment of a bowl (Fig. 13)

Inv. No. AK14/I/21-141a

Type: Form 1, Type 2 (Malfitana 2007: 45–46).

Dimensions: rim diameter ca. 9–11 cm; preserved height 2.6 cm.

Clay: yellowish buff fine-grained clay with a slight trace of pinkish hue and fine limestone admixture, covered with a poor-quality matt orange-red slip scratched in places. On the surface were traces of secondary overfiring visible on the slip, which results from the nature of Layer 21, where the fragment was found.

Description: fragment with a preserved ornament of a stylised tree (?).

#### 6. Fragment of a bowl (Fig. 14)

Inv. No. AK14/I/21-141b

Type: Form 1, Type 1 (Malfitana 2007: 42–45).

Dimensions: rim diameter ca. 10 cm; preserved height 2.5 cm.

Clay: yellowish buff – orange fine-grained clay with a trace of fine limestone admixture. The surface of the vessel was covered with a thick layer of matt intensely red slip, scratched in places. Weakly preserved.

Description: the decoration belongs to Type 6 with a floral motif. Weakly preserved.

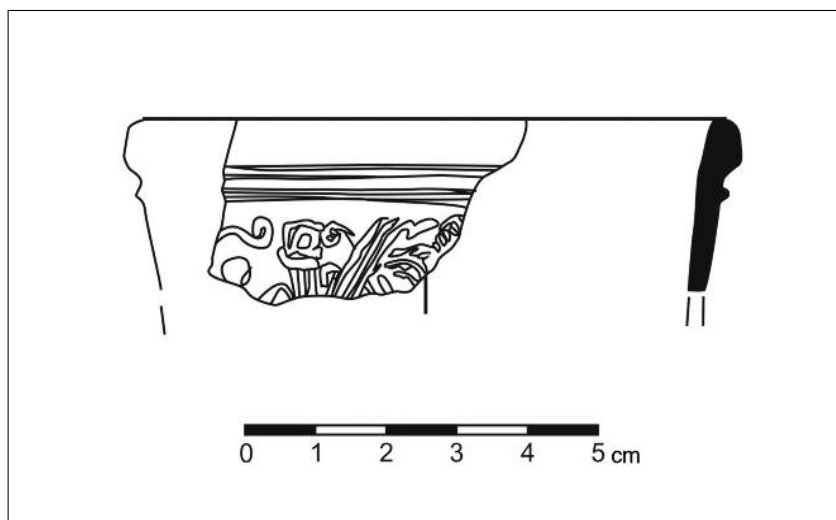


Fig. 12. Fragment of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-803a (Drawing A. Zańko, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 12. Fragment czarki, nr inw. AK14/I/21-803a.

<sup>16</sup> The figure walking to the right with one hand on its hip and the other supporting a large basket full of grapes (SPITZER 1942: 183).

<sup>17</sup> On other examples of this type the figure passes through a thick forest (SPITZER 1942: 183).

Fig. 13. Fragment of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-141a, with a preserved ornament of a stylised tree (?) (Drawing A. Zańko, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 13. Fragment czarki, nr inw. AK14/I/21-141a, z zachowanym ornamentem stylizowanego drzewa (?).

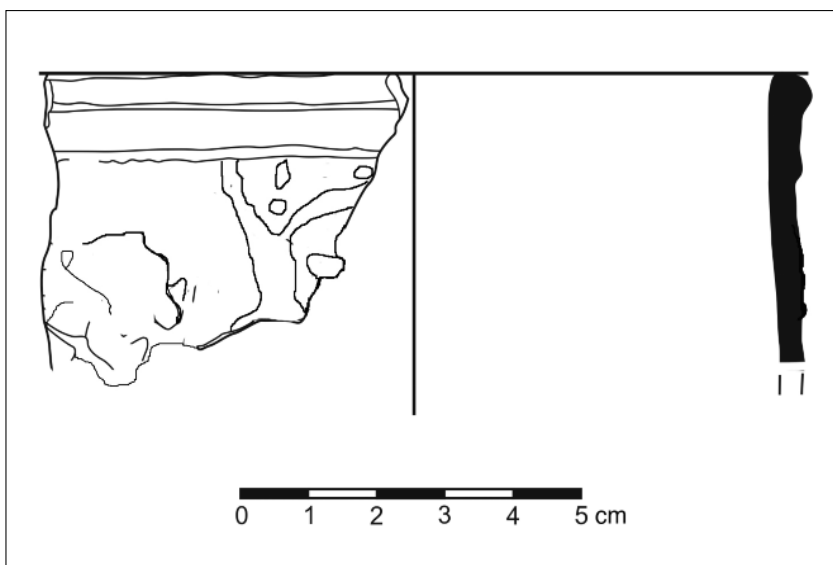


Fig. 14. Fragment of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-141b with a floral motif (Drawing K. Wójcik, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 14. Fragment czarki, nr inw. AK14/I/21-141b z zachowanym ornamentem roślinnym.

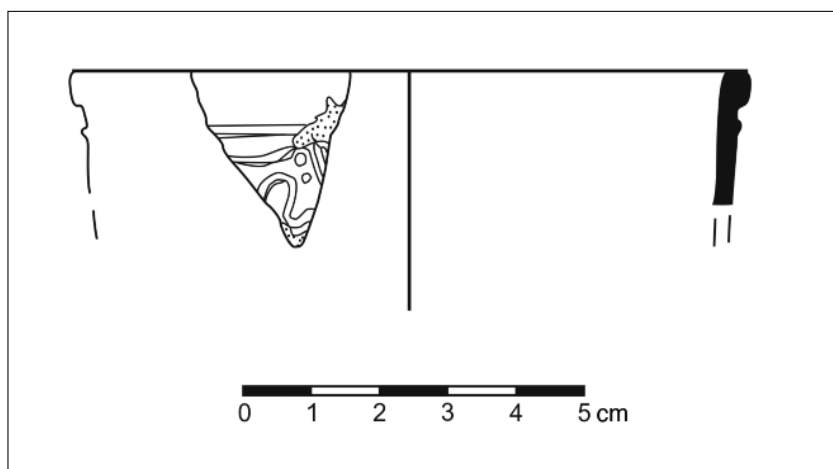
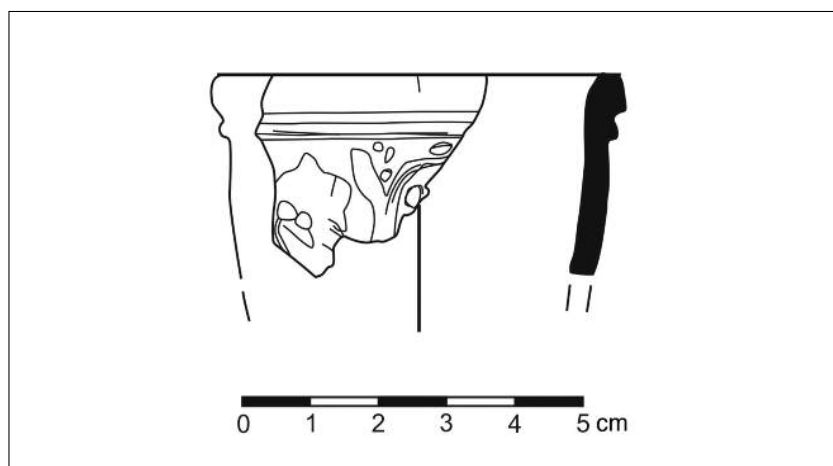


Fig. 15. Fragment of the bowl, inv. No. AK14/I/21-803b, with a partially preserved ornamental motif of a stylised tree (?) (Drawing K. Wójcik, Archaeological Mission of Akrai).

Ryc. 15. Fragment czarki, nr inw. AK14/I/21-803b, z częściowo zachowanym ornamentem stylizowanego drzewa (?).



### 7. Fragment of a bowl (Fig. 15)

Inv. No. AK14/I/21-803b

Type: Form 1, Type 1 (Malfitana 2007: 42–45).

Dimensions: rim diameter ca. 6. cm; preserved height 3.5 cm.

Clay: very well-prepared light red fine-grained clay with a high-quality red slip.

Description: fragment with a blurred and partially preserved ornamental motif of a stylised tree (?).

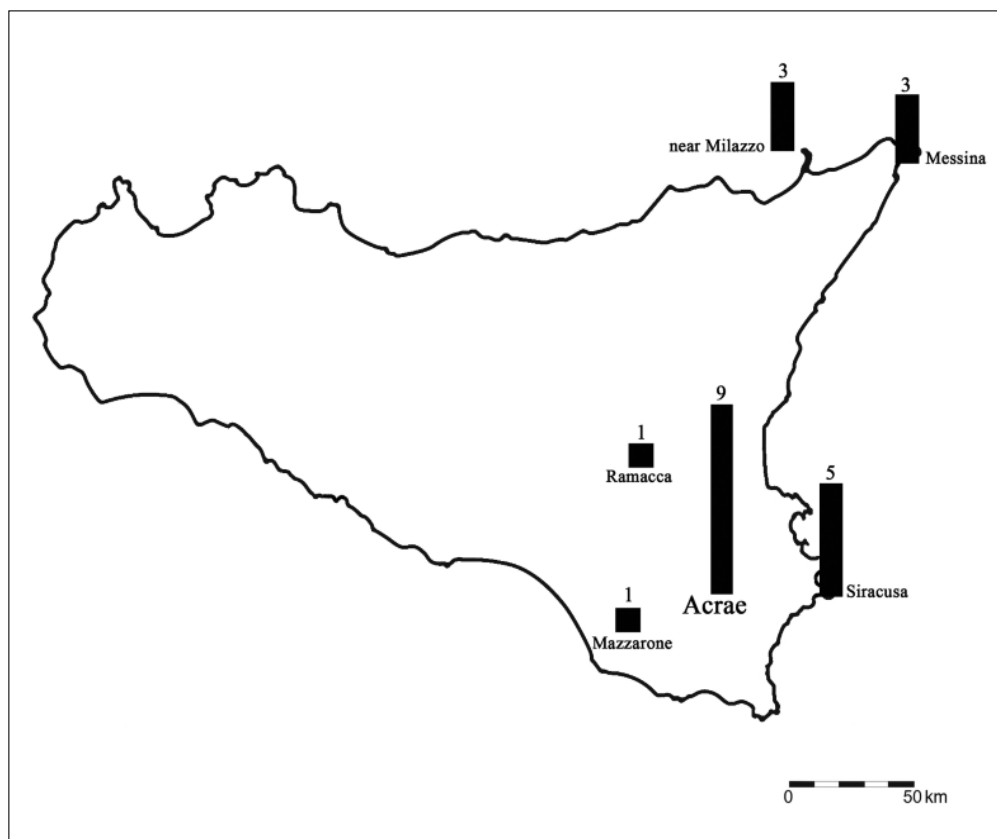


Fig. 16. Distribution map of Corinthian Roman relief bowls in Sicily (redrawn from MALFITANA 2007: 149, fig. 74 and completed by R. Chowaniec).

Ryc. 16. Mapa rozrzutu rzymskich reliefowych czarek korynckich na Sycylii.

### Corinthian Roman relief bowls in the Mediterranean and in Sicily

Bowls of this kind, as it was mentioned previously, were recorded in various areas of the Mediterranean basin, principally on the Italian and Dalmatian coasts, then on the Peloponnesus, and in a minor quantity on the southern coasts of France and the eastern and southern coasts of Spain. Smaller amounts – probably because of predominance of North African products in this period<sup>18</sup> – were found also in Benghazi, Alexandria, Paphos, and a comparable number in the easternmost part of the Mediterranean. It should be remembered that the concentration of finds does not always depend only on the real distribution of pottery, but very often on the state of research in particular areas.

In the context of so-called “crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century” in the Roman Empire, the peak of manufacture and circulation of Corinthian Roman relief bowls in this period

is worthy of note. In recent years, a notable increase of knowledge about this ceramics has been noticed, also with reference to the economic and political situation. The period between the early and the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, despite political turbulences, is known currently as a time of pan-Mediterranean trade, which recovered after an almost half a century of interruption (REYNOLDS 2010).

While in Italy and in some places in Africa (with the exception of Carthage), local production of fine ware broke down in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD and did not recover, already in the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, the Corinthian workshops established their own branches, i.e., in Athens, to produce, e.g., Corinthian types of lamps (ENGELS 1990: 35). Production centres were found in Kallistos, Synphoros, Loukios, Epagathos, Posphoros, Secoundos and Preimos (PERLZWEIG 1961: 7–8, 48–49). It is also believable that relief bowls, particularly those of worse quality, were likewise produced there, instead of Corinth, or also there.

<sup>18</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD the fine wares produced in Northern Africa were exported mainly to the neighbouring areas, and also to Italy, Sicily and the coast of Spain and France. However, in the

4<sup>th</sup> c. AD the African workshops exported their products (African Red Slip Ware, lamps) to most markets around the Mediterranean Sea (BES, POBLOME 2009).

Ca. AD 267 Corinth and some other centres in Greece had to deal with the Herulian invasion,<sup>19</sup> but miscellaneous material, such as imported African Red Slip Ware, Egyptian glass, fine wares and amphorae from the Aegean region can be found in later Corinthian deposits (WARNER SLANE 1994). In the time of the Tetrarchy the economy of Corinth was fundamentally different from what it was in the Early or Late Roman Period (WARNER SLANE 1994). Thus, the Corinth production, most probably with the great support of the above mentioned “branch workshops,” only slightly suffered in the economic crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD. Even though the central Roman market began to be flooded by North African products (MACKENSEN 2006), the pottery manufactured there appeared also in large quantity at eastern sites, with urban and non-urban status (BES, POBLOME 2009: 67).

Roman Corinthian relief bowls, in contrast to other areas, are rather rare in the Sicilian context. Therefore, they could be interesting not only in the local context of *Acrae*, but for the whole island. Only 14 specimens have been published in Sicily so far (Fig. 16). Admittedly, D. Malfitana describes 17 fragments in total, but only 14 of them come from Sicily and among the rest 2 are from the Lipari Islands and 1 from Malta (MALFITANA 2007: 151, table 9). The finds come from the following locations: 1 item from Mazzarone, Prov. Ragusa; 3 from Messina, Prov. Messina; 3 from a shipwreck discovered near Milazzo, Prov. Messina; 1 from Ramacca, Prov. Catania; 5 from Syracuse and 1 specimen from an unknown location in Sicily, currently held by the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Kassel. These 14 items represent ca. 2.7% of all recorded fragments in provinces of the Roman Empire.

Undoubtedly, the bowls, like other categories of pottery, constitute a proof of good circulation of commodities in the Mediterranean, inflow of imports to the port in Syracuse and, consequently, to *Acrae* in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the early 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD. Fine wares in this period generally come from large production centres as exemplified by the strong “Corinthian” production (WARNER SLANE 2003: 330). The findings of Corinthian relief bowls, albeit exceptional, are not the only vessels imported from the East to Sicily and *Acrae*, the urban centre located in the Hyblaean Mountains. The local market was supplied with oriental sigillata A and B as well as with Knidian relief bowls, and beside that, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, with Phocaeen Red Slip Ware (VAAG 2005), found, i.a., in Syracuse, Naxos, Catania, Messina, or with Cypriot Red Slip Ware, found in Catania, Aci Trezza (MALFITANA 2004: 246; MALFITANA, POBLOME, LUND 2005). The increase in the volume of oriental artefacts and multiplicity of eastern pottery found in Sicily and also in *Acrae* constitutes a piece of evidence of intensive commercial contacts between the Italian Peninsula, together with western Mediterranean islands, and the Eastern Mediterranean (DE MITRI 2012: 212). However we need to remember that the local Sicilian market was chiefly supplied with North African products, which were easier to obtain and most probably cheaper.

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## Abbreviations

*ATLANTE I* G. PUGLIESE-CARRATELLI (ed.), *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica. Atlante delle forme ceramiche I. Ceramica fine Romana nel bacino Mediterraneo (medio e tardo Impero)*, Roma 1981.

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<sup>19</sup> According to some authors, the end of Corinthian pottery production should be connected with this invasion (JÁRREGA, ABELA

2011: 169–170; MASSÓ, RAMÓN, JÁRREGA 2014: 195).

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RELIEFOWE CZARKI KORYNCKIE Z *ACRAE*, PROW. SYRAKUZY,  
POŁUDNIOWO-WSCHODNIA SYCYLIA

Antyczne miasto *Acrae* (greckie *Ἀκραί*), dzisiaj Palazzolo Acreide, w południowo-wschodniej części Sycylii, w prowincji Syrakuzy, zostało założone przez osadników z doryckich Syrakuz około 664/663 r. p.n.e. Przez długi okres miasto pełniło rolę strażnika królestwa syrakuzkańskiego, któremu było podporządkowane. Rozwój miasta przypadł na ok. połowę III w. p.n.e., co potwierdzają wzniesione w jego obrębie budowle, np. teatr, *buleuterion* (BERNABÒ BREA 1956; CHOWANIEC 2013). Po podboju Sycylii w 241 r. n.e., a następnie ukonstytuowaniu pierwszej prowincji rzymskiej w 227 r. n.e. oraz pokonaniu Syrakuz w 212 r. n.e., *Acrae* zostało wyliczone na liście *stipendiariae civitates*, czyli było miastem zobligowanym do płacenia trybutów Rzymowi (CHOWANIEC, MISIEWICZ 2010). Źródła archeologiczne, potwierdzające funkcjonowanie miasta w czasach Republiki i Cesarstwa, były dotychczas stosunkowo nieliczne. Kolejne materiały źródłowe, przede wszystkim epigraficzne, pojawiają się znacznie później, kiedy to u schyłku antyku *Acrae* jest wymieniane jako jedno z ważniejszych, po Syrakuzach, centrów chrześcijaństwa we wschodniej Sycylii, co udokumentowane jest licznymi odkrytymi w okolicach nekropolami i inskrypcjami, datowanymi na IV i V w. n.e. (ORSI 1931; PUGLIESE CARRATELLI 1953; DISTEFANO 2002).

Od 2009 r. na terenie miasta, dzięki umowie pomiędzy urzędem Soprintendenza dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Siracusa, reprezentowanym przez Dr Beatrice Basile i Dr Rosę Lanteri oraz Uniwersytetem Warszawskim, prowadzone są prace badawcze mające na celu poszerzenie wiedzy na temat topografii i historii miasta w okresie późnohellenistyczno-rzymskim. Badania wykopaliskowe w latach 2011–2014, pozwoliły na odsłonięcie kompleksu mieszkalnego datowanego na w/w okres wraz z późnoantyczną i bizantyjską wtórną zabudową, wzniesioną po trzęsieniu ziemi w połowie IV w. n.e. (Ryc. 1) (CHOWANIEC 2015b).

Pośród bogatego materiału ceramicznego odkrytego w trakcie badań wykopaliskowych prowadzonych w latach 2011–2014, zarejestrowano naczynia zarówno o proveniencji lokalnej, ale także liczne importowane. Do ostatniej kategorii, obok ceramiki z Pantellerii czy ceramiki kni-

dyjskiej, należał rzadki, nie tylko w kontekście stanowiska archeologicznego *Acrae*, ale również całej Sycylii, import ceramiczny, a mianowicie rzymskie reliefowe czarki korynckie (ang. Corinthian relief bowls). Naczynka nazywane są korynckimi ze względu na odkryte w Koryncie matryce do ich produkcji, ale w rzeczywistości mogą pochodzić z innych obszarów Grecji centralnej. Najbardziej charakterystyczne typy reliefowych czarek korynckich mają cylindryczny kształt, charakteryzują się podwyższonym pierścieniowatym dnem, praktycznie płaskim, czasem lekko podnoszącym się ku środkowi naczynia; delikatnie pogrubionym prostym lub zaokrąglonym wylewem oraz prawie pionowymi ściankami zdobionymi dekoracją fryzową wykonaną w dosyć głębokim reliefie w centralnej części naczynia. Przedstawienie centralne podkreślone jest od strony wylewu i dna plastycznymi listwami (delikatnie wypukłymi lub płaskimi). D. Malfitana, który szczegółowo opracował reliefowe czarki korynckie, dokonał typologicznego podziału naczyń, wyróżniając – ze względu na ukształtowanie ścianek, wylewu, dna naczynia – w sumie trzy podstawowe formy, podzielone wewnętrznie na typy. Bogata dekoracja widniejąca na naczyniach została zaklasyfikowana do siedmiu kategorii, między innymi wyróżniono sceny przedstawiające prace Herkulesa, sceny bitewne i przedstawienia o charakterze dionizyjskim.

Z terenów Sycylii zarejestrowano dotychczas jedynie 14 takich znalezisk, zaś w *Acrae* odkryto w sumie dziewięć fragmentów naczyń, w tym jeden stanowiący prawie pół naczynia. Zabytki z *Acrae* są do siebie dość zbliżone, jednakże analiza makroskopowa wskazuje na różnice widoczne zarówno w odcieniu polewy i jej niejednorodnej jakości, jak i przede wszystkim w uformowaniu wylewu i rodzaju dekoracji reliefowej. Wszystkie fragmenty ceramiki zostały odkryte w tym samym miejscu, w obrębie warstwy stratygraficznej nr 21, zlokalizowanej na południe od pomieszczeń nr 3 i 4. Najciekawszym i jednocześnie najbardziej okazałym fragmentem jest znalezisko o numerze inwentarzowym AK14/I/21-250, reprezentujące tzw. grupę 2 wg Malfitany, czyli sceny bitewne, generalnie opisywane jako sceny walki z barbarzyńcami (Ryc. 3–8). Sposób wykonania i przedstawienia sugerują, że poszczególne sceny wykonane były na odrębnych matrycach. Przedstawienia

usytuowane są na różnej wysokości, nakładają się na siebie i nachodzą na dolną listwę. Wykonane zostały mało starannie, część postaci oraz detale przedstawienia są albo w ogóle niewidoczne, albo jedynie schematycznie zarysowane. Widoczne są nieznaczne przesunięcia dekoracji, co mogłoby wskazywać, że poszczególne sceny w matrycy były wykonywane oddzielnie.

Dotychczasowe studia nad tą kategorią ceramiki pokazały, że bez wątpienia reliefowe czarki korynckie zaczęły być wytwarzane około połowy II w. n.e., a ich produkcja trwała aż do początków IV w. n.e., przy czym największa intensywność przypadła na wiek III n.e., co

w kontekście tzw. kryzysu III wieku stanowi ciekawe zjawisko.

Do *Acrae* ceramika dotarła z całą pewnością przez port w Syrakuzach. Znaleźiska takie, chociaż wyjątkowe, nie stanowią jedynych naczyń importowanych ze wschodu do tego ośrodka miejskiego położonego w paśmie gór Monti Iblei. Na rynek lokalny docierały zarówno sigillata orientalna A, jak i B, czy ceramika knidyjska, a w III i IV w. n.e. na terenach wschodniego wybrzeża Sycylii, od Messyny po Syrakuzy, zarejestrowane zostały także Phocaean Red Slip Ware czy Cypriot Red Slip Ware (DOMŻALSKI 2015; MŁYNARCYK 2015; WICENCIAK 2015).