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AN UNPUBLISHED IONIAN CUP
FROM THE NATIONAL MUSEUM
IN WARSAW

Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to describe one of the few Ionian cups from the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw. The vase is of East Greek origin and was used as a drinking cup. This type of ceramics was widespread during the Archaic period.*

Keywords: *East Greek pottery; Ionian cups; drinking vessels*

East Greek pottery does not abound in Poland's art collections. The National Museum in Warsaw has only about a dozen pieces, including an unpublished Ionian cup, which was purchased from Barbara Żółtawska in 1997 (inv. no. 237597).

Description of the vessel (Pl. 1)

Shape: Cup on a low, conical foot, thin-walled, deep bowl with a distinctly offset rim. Two horizontal handles, circular in cross-section, attached at the broadest point of the body.

Dimensions: Ht.: 6.6cm, diam. of rim: 10.2cm, diam. of foot: 3.5cm, depth of bowl: 5cm.

Clay: Reddish yellow (5YR 6/6) well purified, small quantity of fine mica inclusions.

Glaze: Black (5YR 2.5/1). Exterior: all, except band in the handle zone (0.3-0.5mm) and inner part of the handles and foot. Interior: band at rim.

Red lines: Dusky red (10R 3/4). Exterior: thin bands (0.3mm)

in the middle part of the rim and in the body 0.8mm below the handle zone. Interior: thin band in the rim and in the middle of the bowl.

Technical features and condition: Smooth and coated surface with a dull glaze (a thin, uneven layer), inside worn out with small spalls in some areas. Complete form though glued, but only a small part of the foot was reconstructed with gypsum; a very fine crack through the bowl is discernible. A chip off the lip is missing.

Comments and analogies

The vessel described above has one of the most characteristic shapes produced by the East Greek pottery workshops of the Orientalizing period. It belongs to a numerous group of plain drinking cups, the 'Ionian cups', which were decorated with simple painted horizontal bands with a reserved area between the handles (see Cook and Dupont 1998, 129 with further bibliography; Boardman 1998, 149; Tsiafakis 2008, 15-26). Older works used over 12 different terms for their classification, but Catling and Shipley (1989, 199, tab. I) neatly collated them into one useful table. However, they also proposed to replace them with just one label, 'East Greek Black Glazed cups' – or 'BG cups' (Catling and Shipley 1989, 188), as had been suggested many years previously by Hayes (Boardman and Hayes 1966, 111). Ionian cups are much more numerous in archaeological contexts than the chronologically older Little Masters cups or Vroulia cups (Cook and Dupont 1998, 129).

The results of the latest physicochemical analyses of the clay have allowed us to broaden our knowledge concerning the production centres of these cups. Samos has now been identified as the most important one, since the production of Ionian cups began there around 700 BC (Boardman 1998, 149). Two other centres were Miletus and Rhodes, but their possible role as the key manufacturing one has now been discounted. In addition, two pottery groups of unidentified origin have recently been discerned and have been temporally termed South Ionian 3 (Dupont 1983, 26-29, 33-36) and Ionian B (Jones 1986, 665-671). These cups were also produced in Aeolia (Cook and Dupont 1998, 129).

Ionian cups were widely distributed throughout the Mediterranean (cf. Catling and Shipley 1989, 188f., notes 4-10) and many examples have been found in Magna Graecia and Etruria (Tsiafakis 2008, 7). This has been confirmed by recent studies suggesting the existence of production centres on Sicily, whose output was especially prolific in the late 7th century BC

and throughout the 6th century BC (Belfiore *et al.* 2010, 57; Barone *et al.* 2011, 142), as well at other sites in Italy: Sybaris, Metapontum, Sirir-Policoro (Heraclea Lucania), Termitito (Tsiafakis 2008, 15). Ionian cups found at sites located along the Black Sea coast further demonstrate the wide distribution and popularity of the shape (Dupont 1983, 26-29; Jones 1987, 665-671; Catling and Shipley 1989, 188f., notes 4-10; Bouzek 1990, 36; Bouzek 2005, 66).

The decoration of the Warsaw cup is characteristic of Ionian cups from the late 7th century BC and good analogies have been found at Megara Hyblaea; it could thus be classified as Villard and Vallet's type A1 (1955, 15-18, pl. IV, figs A, B), dating to 640/630-600 BC. Further analogies can be observed in finds from Tocra, namely in types I and III of the Rhodian series dating to 630-600 BC (Boardman and Hayes 1966, 120, 122, cat. 1192, type I, fig. 55: 1192). The cup also resembles Tsiafakis' type 1, as well as Hanfmann's type I, Plough's group 2, Isler's group b, Furtwängler's group 3 and 4 and Boldrini's type I (Tsiafakis 2008, 16 with further literature). The best analogy for the Warsaw cup is found in the shape of the Ionian cup from the Douglas Souden collection, currently housed in the British Museum (inv. no. 1981,0703.1). To my knowledge, the vase, which probably comes from Miletus and can be dated to about 600 BC, has not been published (information based on the glass-case description). Unfortunately, the manufacturing centre for this type of cup is not clearly defined, although some scholars have suggested Samos and Rhodes (Pierro 1984, 22-26; cf. Tsiafakis 2008, 16).

Ionian cups were intended as funerary equipment and this can be shown by the context of the finds unearthed on Rhodes during the Kamiros research project in the first quarter of the 20th century (Jacopi 1933, 104, 3 (14025), fig. 116, Sep. XXX, the author does not specify the chronology of the development), as well as of those encountered in Syracuse (Villard and Vallet 1955, nos 441 and 200) and Sibaris and Metaponto (Tsiafakis 2008, 7).

To conclude, based on the analogies given above and my observations, it can be stated that the Warsaw cup comes from an East Greek workshop (Miletus?) and dates to the years 640/630-600 BC, probably closer to 600 BC.

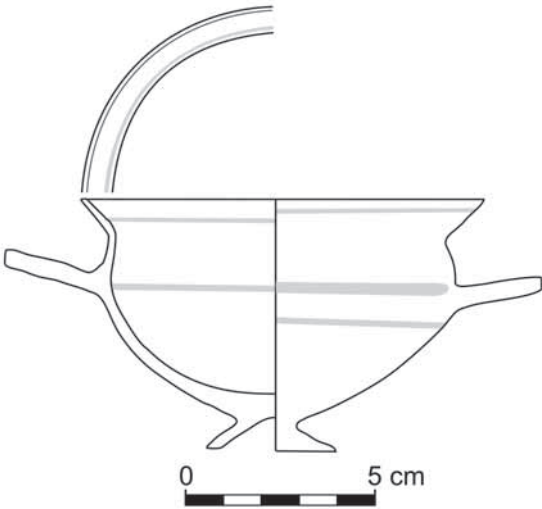
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Pl. 1. A Ionian cup from the National Museum in Warsaw collection.
Drawing by the author