Attic Black Glaze Ware at Elea/Velia on the Tyrrhenian Coast

Introduction

As in other western Greek cities, there is evidence at Velia for the import of Attic plain black glaze pottery from the last quarter of the sixth to about the mid of the fourth century B.C.E. The fragments of pottery found in leveling layers are scattered in small pieces, dislocated and worn; circumstances that often make it impossible to thoroughly study the pottery shapes or to compare them with the well published Athenian material of the period.

The object of this paper is therefore twofold. Firstly, an attempt will be made to outline the most common shapes of Attic import in the Western Greek colony of Velia from the beginning of the fifth century B.C.E. to the time imports ceased, which must be placed probably around the third quarter of the fourth century B.C.E.

Secondly, the main point of this paper will be to explain the method of fabric analysis with which it has been possible to distinguish Attic import more or less precisely from their local or regional imitations despite their fragmentary character, as well as to explain the specific difficulties which arise when applying the method to this special topic.

History of Research

Although archaometrical studies of black glaze ware in Magna Grecia look back on a long history and shed light on the chemical and mineralogical-petrographical composition of the fabrics, the application of these results by the archaeologists (pottery specialists) to more than the sampled pieces seems to still be difficult. The distinction between Attic and non-Attic objects was previously made according to shape or surface treatment or simply with the help of "pottery sense".

Fabric Analysis: Attic Fabrics versus Local/Regional Productions

The archaometrical analyses of the observed fabrics ATH-G-1 to ATH-G-3 showed one mineralogical-petrographical type in two varieties that are very much related to each other. Due to a lack of relative data, it was not possible to compare the results directly to samples from Athens, but the fabrics established by microscopic analysis formed a coherent group which differed clearly from local and other Southern Italian fabrics. As these fabrics occurred only with Athenian shapes and could be compared with the fabrics of Attic red glaze pottery, an Attic origin seems very probable.

In the specific case of Velia, the observed Attic fabrics are easily distinguishable from the fabrics of the local Velinian production, as the latter are characterized by a carbonate-free...
matrix while the Athenian fabrics are riddled with very small and regular carbonate-pseudomorphoses. Morphologically, vessels can however, be nearly identical, as demonstrated in fig. 1 which shows the fragment of an Attic bowl\(^8\) (ATH-G-1, fig.1.1) and an example of a bowl of local manufacture of the same type (VEL-G-1, fig. 1.2).

The distinction between the Attic fabrics and those of Paestum and other regional productions proved to be more difficult as all of them show a certain amount of carbonate-pseudomorphoses. Only with the help of a binocular microscope with a magnification of 40 × and the precise analysis of the fabrics structure was it possible to clearly identify the Attic pieces. First of all, the structure of the matrix of the Attic fabrics (especially ATH-G-1 and ATH-G-2) always is very regularly granular and riddled with tiny well rounded carbonate - pseudomorphoses. Only a very limited number of other tiny particles are distinguishable, such as occasional black or red inclusions and some white mica. In contrast even the finest Paestan fabrics (like PAE-G-4) and the other attested fabrics of regional production (such as PAE-REG-G-1) are coarser and sometimes display infrequent tiny quartz particles which could not be identified in the Attic fabrics. Fig. 2 shows an Attic Kylix type C with concave rim (fig. 2, 1, fabric ATH-G-1) and one example of Paestan production (fig. 2, 2, fabric PAE-G-5).\(^9\) Again, it would not have been possible to attribute them to either the Attic or the Paestan production only by their morphological characteristics. This distinction might however, be decisive for dating as our actual studies of contexts at Velia shows. For example, the cups with concave rim of Paestan production are observed in Velia in contexts up to the mid of the fifth century B.C.E.\(^10\)

The advantages of the method and the new possibilities of dating and interpretation of the shapes will be explained by discussing problems of import and local production of plain black glaze ware in Velia according to the chronological phases.

**The Fifth Century B.C.E.: Attic Shapes and their Regional or Local Counterparts**

Black glaze ware in contexts of the fifth century B.C.E. at Velia always contains a constant percentage of Attic import of about 17–22 %.\(^11\) The relative chronology of contexts at Velia in the fifth century B.C.E. (phases B1–B3, see tab. 1)\(^12\) is based on the dating of these fragments of Attic black glaze pottery. The most important shape in contexts of the early fifth century B.C.E. (phase B1) is the above mentioned kylix C concave lip.\(^13\) It was invented in Athens around 525 BC and ended with its latest developed variety around 450 B.C.E.\(^14\) It was among the most common of the stemmed cups in Athens and also widely used in Southern Italy, where the distinction between Attic import and local “imitations” usually presents some difficulties,\(^15\) especially for Paestum, due to the similarity between the fabrics described above.\(^16\) It was imitated by Paestan workshops as early as the first quarter of the fifth century B.C.E. and exported to Velia, where it represents one of the “type fossils” of the period.\(^17\) In the local Velinian production of black glaze ware, which is attested only to a limited degree in phase B1, the shape did not appear at all, but was imitated only in variants typical for the period around

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8 stemless delicate class, Sparkes and Talcott 1970, no. 483, fig. 5; Morel 1981, 4221.
9 Sparkes and Talcott 1970, nos. 400–10, fig. 4.
10 Trapichler 2003a; Trapichler 2003b.
11 Cf. Gassner 2003, 67; Trapichler 2003a, 208, fig. 1. The analysis included all diagnostic fragments which were attributed to Attic production by fabric analysis.
12 Trapichler 2004; Gassner 2006, 477, fig. 1; Trapichler (forthcoming).
15 Bonghi Jovino 1984 (Pompeji) and Bonghi Jovino 1982 (Vico Equense): a local production is assumed with a workshop in southern Campania which produces in the “clay of Ischia”. For fabrics attested in Paestum see Menard 1998.
16 See Poseidonia – Paestum III, 687, no. 103, fig. 89; Menard 1998, no. 453, fig.28; Ferrara 2009, 152–3.
17 Gassner 2003, 50–1, III.12; Cicala 2002, 149–50, fig. 58.
500 B.C.E. in Athens. These imitations however, stem from contexts of the second quarter and the mid of the fifth century B.C.E. Thus the development of the shape in Athens in the first half of the fifth century B.C.E. obviously was not followed by the Paestan workshops. 18

Phase B2 is characterized by the appearance of another drinking cup, the so-called Vicus cup, which in Athens dates in the second quarter of the fifth century B.C.E. 19 In Velia it appears only sporadically and exclusively as Attic import. 20 In the fifth century B.C.E. apart from the kylikes saltcellars were among the most prominent shapes of Attic import. The type with convex wall and recessed underside appears as Attic import (fig. 3), 21 but is also attested from Paestan, but not from local Velinian workshops in the first half of the fifth century B.C.E. 22 A very characteristic form of Attic import in phase B2 is the stemless cup, most frequently attested with an inset lip, 23 but also occasionally occurring in forms with a plain rim or a special shape with the lip inset visible only on the outside (fig. 4). 24 For the examples of the Athenian Agora, one single workshop was supposed for the many examples of the shape which are most frequent in the late fifth century B.C.E. 25 The stemless cup with inset lip was obviously also exported to the Western Mediterranean, to Southern Italy 26 and as far as the south of the Iberian Peninsula, 27 where the shape became known as Castulo Cup and dated from the second quarter of the fifth to as late as the early fourth century B.C.E. 28 At various sites in Southern Campania a local production or imitation of the form was supposed. 29 At Velia, especially the heavy stemless with inset lip seemed to be extremely popular for a long time as the shape is attested in Phase B2 and B3 and found together with small bowls with convex-concave profile 30 and the later variant of the small bowl with convex profile. These small bowls are always imported from Athens and do not stem from local or regional workshops.

The Attic vessels are usually covered with an extremely brilliant black glaze of high quality which the local potters were obviously not able to produce. The reserved zones are decorated in the manner described for examples of the Athenian Agora, being covered with a thin red slip (added red), which tentatively was identified as mitos. 31 During the fifth century B.C.E. in Velia, incised decoration on black glaze ware was limited to vessels that were imported from Athens, as proven by fabric analysis. At Athens Incising and stamping started in the mid of the fifth century B.C.E. and is mainly attested on cups of different types, frequently on the inside of stemless cups (fig. 5) and of bolsals in contexts of phases B2 and B3. 32 It can be supposed that these shapes served particular uses, such as for special events like symposia, but also cultic activities or dedications, because many of these high quality vessels were found on the acropolis of Velia in the filling of the koilon of the Hellenistic theater which contained a high amount

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18 For further details see Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 91, nos. 400–10, fig. 4; Roberts 1986, 7, figs. 1–3; Vanderpool 1946, 317, nos. 230–6, pl. 63.
19 Sparkes Talcott 1970, nos. 434–7, fig. 5; Rotroff and Oakley 1992, nos. 183–4, fig. 11.
20 For an example of the shape in Velia see Gassner 2003, 51, II.a 20, pl. 13, the provenance of a second example in the same context was identified with Paestum.
21 Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 135, nos. 890–8, pl. 33.
24 Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 101, no. 469, fig. 5.
26 E.g. at Metaponto, Lipari, Naples, Castel Capuano (tomba XLIII), see Pontrandolfo 2000, 122–3.
29 Bonghi Jovino 1982, 124, pl. 124; Bonghi Jovino 1984, 90, no. CE 452, pl. 67; d’Onofrio 1991, 29–30, no. 1, fig. 15.
30 Sparkes and Talcott 1970, nos. 817–22, fig. 8; for Velia see Trapichler 2003a, no. 4, fig. 219; Trapichler 2003b, 209, nos. 4, 12, fig. 2.
31 Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 18–9, see also Noble 1960, 315–6. For mitos see: Jones et al. 1997.
32 See also Trapichler 2003a, nos. 3b, 5, fig. 219; Trapichler 2003b, nos. 3, 7, 11, fig. 2.
33 For the supposed function of the Attic shapes in Lipari see Villard 1996, 30–1.
of votive offerings.  

The most important forms imitated by local potters were stemmed cups with thickened rim, skyphoi of Corinthian and Attic type, one-handler and pyxides as well as closed forms like lekythoi (fig. 6). In contexts of the last third of the fifth cent. B.C.E. (phase B3) stemless cups remain the most characteristic shapes. In addition to the stemless cups with inset lip we find now stemless cups of delicate class (fig. 1, 1). Most conspicuous are two rim fragments of a stemless cup, delicate class, which on the inside of the lip are decorated with an ivy tendril and coryumbs painted in added white and red. (fig. 7). In the same period appears the so called bolsal, a shallow variant of the skyphos, which originated in Athens in the third quarter of the fifth century B.C.E. and seemingly gained some importance in the end of the century. It was imported and imitated in some cities of Magna Grecia, where it reached a high popularity especially in the fourth century B.C.E. At Velia in contexts of phase B3 the form was attested exclusively as Attic import, often in a very fragmentary state of conservation as demonstrated by a base provided with a flaring ringfoot. Both forms, the stemless cup (fig. 5,3) and the bolsal, are decorated with incised and stamped decoration on the inside of the floor (fig. 8). In the same phase B3 also the small bowls with convex – concave wall - in a later variant with small foot – belong to the shapes, which are exclusively imported from Athens (fig.9).

On the other hand we now observe local imitations of drinking vessel, which hitherto did not belong to the repertoire of local or regional productions, like the stemless delicate class and, most important for the further development of the fourth century B.C.E., a deep form which can be referred to as cup skyphos with heavy wall. Fig. 10 shows an example of the form from a regional production together with an imported vessel. The Attic fragment of a cup skyphos heavy wall (fig. 10,1) finds no exact parallel within the deposits of the Athenian Agora, but a comparable form is published as Attic import in Corinth. The cup skyphos heavy wall of the Athenian Agora can be distinguished by its massively thickened rim from the regional or local specimens.

Thus, the boundaries between Attic forms and the local repertoire were merging and a growing number of forms which have been overtaken in the local repertoire in addition to shapes like skyphoi, one-handler and pyxides that already appeared in regionals productions of the late sixth century B.C.E.

The Fourth Century B.C.E.: Attic Import in Velinian Contexts of Phase C

In the contexts of the fourth century B.C.E. in Velia the percentage of Attic import did not supreate 5–12 %. As there are many finds, like the specimens of the type stemless inset lip, that have to be seen as residual, the percentage of Attic import in the contemporaneous repertoire may be regarded as even smaller. The high percentage of residual pieces among the black glaze ware may be explained with the high esteem which this high quality table ware had among the users, but could also be noted in other classes like amphorae and can also be explained by the geo-morphological situation of the site. The same tendency of decreasing Attic import can also be observed at other sites in Southern Italy. It might be due to the growing importance of local productions, but also to the general economic situation in the western Mediterranean.

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34 These finds have been studied by the author, but are not published yet. For the excavation of the theater see Krinzing 2003; Krinzing 2006.
35 Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 102, nos. 483–517, fig. 5.
36 Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 107–9, fig. 6.
37 For Poseidonia see Menard 1998, 401, no. 486; for the local production of the shape in Locri and Lipari see Locri II, 109, pls. 21, 22 and Lipara II, 212, pl. c2.
38 To the problem of the chronology of the early fourth century B.C.E. for lack of reliable deposits see Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 117.
39 See Pemberton 1977, 77 nos. C33–418, fig. 15.
40 Descat 1987, 250.
have shifted to the regions of Punic influence, like western Sicily, the Iberian Peninsula, the Baleares and Sardinia.\footnote{For the problematic of the Attic import in the fourth century B.C.E. in general see \textit{Grecs et Ibères; Céramique Attique}.}

**Attested Attic Shapes, their Local and Regional Counterparts and their Chronology**

Based upon analyses of the shapes of imported Attic black glaze pottery in the western Mediterranean (Sicily, Sardinia, Gallic and the Iberian coast, and Carthage) it can be stated that the forms differ from those which were most common in Athens itself.\footnote{See contributions in: \textit{Céramique Attique}; for Sardinia see Tronchetti 1994; for Western Sicily see Caflisch 1991.} Their choice obviously reflects not only the taste, but also the table manners of the users.\footnote{Morel 1982, 209–10; Bats 1988b, 198: “Chaque culture possède ses instruments de préparation et de consommation, qui ne sont pas strictement interchangeable, même s’il peut y avoir des emprunts de sous-culture à sous-culture, voire de culture à culture, et s’il existe des coïncidences de nécessité.”}

At Velia Attic import was mostly preferred for drinking vessels while dishes for eating like bowls and dishes of the \textit{outturned rim or incurving rim} type which are frequently found elsewhere in the Western Mediterranean as Attic imports,\footnote{See e. g. the shipwreck of El Sec: Cerda 1987, 244–5.} are attested only sporadically. For functional forms like bowls the Velians preferred their own vessel types which were produced for at least one century following a local or regional tradition.\footnote{Trapichler 2003a.} It is noteworthy that popular and obviously frequently exported shapes like the cup kantharos with \textit{moulded rim}, dating between 390 and 380 B.C.E. at Athens\footnote{Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 117, no. 648.} are only singularly present in Velinian contexts (fig. 11) while cup skyphoi of other types with obviously the same function are frequently produced in local or regional workshops from the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E.\footnote{Gassner and Trapichler 2010; Trapichler (forthcoming).} Most important in the development of the fourth century B.C.E. is the fact, that the typical drinking vessels of the fifth century B.C.E., the kylikes imported from Athens, were replaced by the deeper forms of cup skyphoi. The most important shape of the Attic import in the beginning of the fourth century is first the cup skyphos with \textit{heavy wall}, and later the cup skyphos with light wall, for both of which only few fragments are attested as Attic import. Partly, the imported examples from Athens of the type cup skyphoi \textit{light wall} can also be distinguished from local/regional products by morphological details: The offset rim on the inside of the cup is more accentuated with the Attic specimens as also known from examples at Athens.\footnote{Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 110, no. 608, pl. 6.} (fig. 12). Of chronological relevance is the fact that the few imported Attic examples appear in the first third of the fourth century B.C.E. (phase C1), while regional and local pieces are characteristic for phase C2 in the second third of the fourth century B.C.E.\footnote{The local products belong to PAE-REG-G-1 or PAE-G-4.} However, Attic fragments of the type with impressed and stamped decoration are sporadically attested. The much more frequent locally or regionally produced examples show a very similar decoration with the patterns carefully impressed and the stamps accurately cut (fig. 13). The similarity with Attic products is very close also in the surface treatment. The high quality of these vessels indeed leads to the assumption that Athenian potters emigrated to the Tyrrenian coast, as has been proposed by J.P. Morel for Naples.\footnote{See Morel 1985, 333.} The type cup skyphoi \textit{light wall} sees a long development through the fourth and the first half of the third century B.C.E., remaining the favorite form of drinking vessel\footnote{Trapichler (forthcoming).} in a time when in Athens and elsewhere in the Mediterranean area the form had long been abandoned, with the \textit{cup kantharos} or \textit{kantharos} taking its place.\footnote{For Athens see Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 117; Rotroff 1997, 83, 85.}
evidence for drinking vessels imported from Athens in the fourth century B.C.E. consists of fragments of skyphoi of the Corinthian type, which are very similar to local shapes, and the skyphoi of the Attic type with outturned rim profile, which in Athens becomes characteristic for the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E.\(^{53}\) (fig.14). Despite their reduced number, small bowls and saltcellars remain of continuing importance. They are attested with form types which appear to be exclusively of Attic production, such as the salt cellar with \textit{concave wall} (fig. 15, 1)\(^{54}\) and the small bowl with \textit{projecting rim}\(^{55}\) (fig. 15, 2), as well as with types like the small bowl with \textit{broad base}.\(^{56}\) Small bowls with the same type of echinus rim, but with a different kind of ringfoot are also produced by local and regional workshops (fig. 15, 3).

The latest Attic pieces (fig. 16) appear in Velia in contexts of phase C3 in the last third of the fourth century B.C.E. A saltcellar, \textit{footed}\(^{57}\) and a fragment of a base belonging probably to a plate type with \textit{rolled rim}\(^{58}\) or a \textit{fish plate}\(^{59}\) mark the end of Attic import in Velia.

\textbf{References}


\textit{55} Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 135, no. 880, fig. 9, dated to the late fourth century B.C.E.


\textit{57} Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 303, no. 949, fig. 9 (350–325 B.C.E).

\textit{58} Sparkes Talcott 1970, 310, no. 1058, fig.10 (350–325 B.C.E.).


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Fig. 1: Velia, phase B3. Stemless cup *delicate class*: 1. Attic, fabric ATH-G-1; 2. Production of Velia. VEL-G-1

Fig. 2: Velia, phase B1 and B2. Kylix type C: 1, Attic, fabric ATH-G-1

Fig. 3: Velia, phase B2. Saltcellar with recessed underside, 1. Fabric ATH-G-2; 2. Fabric ATH-G-1
Fig. 4: Velia phase B2 and B3. Stemless cup *inset lip*, 1–5. Fabric ATH-G-1
Fig. 5: Velia phase B2 and B3. cups with incised decoration: 1. Fabric ATH-G-3; 2–3. Fabric ATH-G-1
Fig. 7: Velia, phase B3. Stemless cup, *delicate class* with painted decoration, fabric ATH-G-1

Fig. 8: Velia, phase B3. Bolsal, ringfeet: 1. fabric ATH-G-3; 2–3: with incised and stamped decoration, fabric ATH-G-1
Fig. 9: Velia, phase B3. Bowl, shallow wall, concave-convex profile 1–3, fabric ATH-G-1

Fig. 10: Velia, phase B3. Cup skyphos: 1. Attic, fabric ATH-G-1, 2. Paestan, fabric PAE-G-8
Fig. 11: Velia, phase C. cup kantharos, *moulded rim*, fabric ATH-G-3

Fig. 12: Velia, phase C1. 1–2. cup skphos *light wall*, Attic, fabric ATH-G-1; 3. Phase C2. Paestan, fabric PAE-G-4
Fig. 13: Velia, phase C. Attic cup-skyphoi, ringfeet with stamped and incised decoration: 1. fabric ATH-G-2; 2–3. fabric ATH-G-1

Fig. 14: Velia phase C1. Skyphos Attic type, fabric ATH-G-1
Fig. 15: Velia, phase C2. Small bowls, 1–2: fabric ATH-G-3; 3. fabric ATH-G-1

Fig. 16: Velia, phase C3. 1. Plate or bowl, ringfoot, fabric ATH-G-1; 2. Small bowl, footed, fabric ATH-G-1