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Attic ceramics for the symposium at Marzabotto

Christoph Reusser

VINCENZO BALDONI, *LA CERAMICA ATTICA DAGLI SCAVI OTTOCENTESCHI DI MARZABOTTO* (Kainua; Studi e Scavi, nuova serie 21; Alma Mater Studiorum, Università di Bologna, Dipartimento di Archeologia; Ante Quem, Bologna 2009). Pp. 271, figs. 571, Tav. 28. ISBN 978-88-7849-040-6. EUR 23.50.

The Etruscan city at Marzabotto, c.20 km southwest of Bologna, was discovered by chance shortly before the middle of the 19th c. This was followed by extensive excavations in 1862/63 and 1866-1869. The excavator at the time believed that the uncovered remains belonged to a necropolis. It was only after the systematic excavations in 1888/89 that the site was recognized as a medium-sized city with streets, houses and workshops. The city was laid out orthogonally according to Etruscan religious belief. Also undergoing archaeological investigation in the 19th c. were some 300 Etruscan tombs spanning the period from the late 6th until the early 4th c. B.C., as well as the acropolis with various temples and sanctuaries.

The research has been resumed in the past couple of decades with an emphasis placed on the study of the houses and the clarification of the topographical situation on the acropolis and the sanctuaries.¹

Today the site near Marzabotto, whose Etruscan name was probably *Kainua* (as inscriptions lead us to assume), can certainly be regarded as the best-known, and for visitors the most comprehensible, Etruscan city. Noteworthy is the orthogonal urban layout which consists of wide *plateiai* and narrower *stenopoi* which delimit rectangular *insulae* of various sizes with regularly laid-out houses. Thanks to the new research, the city's most important religious precinct, the sanctuary of *Tinia* with its large peripteral temple, can be added. The archaeological finds show clearly that the city was established around the middle of the 6th c. B.C. on the river Reno on an important route crossing the Appenines between Etruria Padana and Tuscany. The city was abandoned in the first few decades of the 4th c. B.C., probably as a result of the migration by Celts into the Po valley. Tombs and stray finds attest to the existence of a humble Celtic settlement a couple of decades later.

The present, richly illustrated book is the first in a new series called *Kainua*, published by the University of Bologna and dedicated to its research at Marzabotto over a long period. It deals with the large quantity of Attic ceramics found during the excavations of the 19th c. They came exclusively from the urban area (its streets, houses and workshops) and from the tombs. Apparently no Attic ceramics were found in the area of the acropolis, although this may be due to insufficient archaeological documentation. The best-preserved vessels were found in tombs, while the mostly small and weathered sherds derive from the houses, workshops, streets and wells. The finds from the 19th-c. excavations were mostly damaged during the mistaken bombardment of the Marzabotto museum in 1944, which explains the partial loss of and indications of secondary fire on numerous finds, including Attic ceramics.

In an introductory chapter V. Baldoni briefly outlines the history of the excavations and the collection and in an exemplary manner tries to reconstruct possible find contexts and establish more precise details about the places of discovery using the older publications and archival sources. The main part of the book consists of the meticulous catalogue comprising 1130 entries ordered according to style (black-figured, red-figured, black-glaze).

Black-figured production is represented by an estimated 101 vessels (215 fragments), the earliest dating to the third quarter of the 6th c. B.C., the bulk originating from the decades before and around 500 B.C. They are mainly *kylikes* and *skyphoi*, sporadic kraters and amphorae, as well as an early *stamnos* which served as an urn.

Much more numerous is red-figured ware, estimated at a minimum of 304 vessels (831 frag-

1 Cf. G. Sassatelli and E. Govi (a cura di), *Culti, forma urbana e artigianato a Marzabotto. Nuove prospettive di ricerca* (Studi e Scavi n.s. 11, Bologna 2005), with review by G. Cifani at *JRA* 20 (2007) 393-96.

ments), again mostly assignable to *kylikes*, which make up more than half the total material. They are followed in the statistics by the *skyphoi* and a remarkable number (52) of kraters, mainly column kraters (other shapes occur only sporadically). There was a continuous import of Attic ceramics to Marzabotto from the late 6th until the first quarter of the 4th c. B.C., after which there was a marked decrease. The first and the second halves of the 5th c. are represented, more or less equally, by 141 datable vessels (the second half seems to dominate). The latest vessels are a *skyphos* of the Fat Boy Group and two stemless cups assignable to the Vienna 116 Group.

On account of the substantial amount of black-glaze ware (877 fragments; an estimated 725 vessels, mainly *kylikes* and *skyphoi*), Baldoni rightly points out that in most cases it is not possible to rule out that the fragments may originally have formed the black-glaze parts of figure-decorated vases. It is therefore not possible to ascertain precisely the relation of the three main categories to each other, but the black-glaze ware must also have been present in large quantities.

Arguably the most interesting Attic vase is the high-quality red-figured double-headed *kantharos* no. 156 (head of satyr, head of maenad) found in a woman's grave. Assigned by J. D. Beazley to the Manchester class, on the rim it possibly shows Menelaos and Helena. Baldoni succeeds in adjoining a fragment showing remains of a women's garment which could support this interpretation.

In a concluding chapter the author contextualizes the material and draws comparisons with other sites in N Italy (Bologna, Spina, Adria). These yield analogies but also reveal certain differences. He goes into detail analyzing the chronological distribution and the spectrum of vase shapes, the latter showing that symposium vessels are most prominent, making up 98%. He then reviews the choice of scenes on the vases and the painters and workshops represented. No unusual scenes are noted. Mythological motifs are rare; as is to be expected, the Dionysiac world is most prominent. Due to the often bad state of preservation Baldoni attempted attributions to painters only to a limited degree beyond the 15 vases previously attributed by Beazley. The chief masters of the Athenian *Kerameikos* are not represented at Marzabotto (the attribution of the small fragment no. 257 to Onesimos seems unsure, the author rightly placing a question-mark against it). An exception is no. 236, the foot fragment of a *kylix*, with the fragmentary signature of the well-known potter Chachrylion (now unfortunately lost); it was in the workshop of Chachrylion that established vase-painters of the early red-figured style worked, amongst them Euphronios.

A glimpse of the Attic ceramics from the new excavations at Marzabotto makes it clear that the overall picture carefully presented by Baldoni has not changed essentially. Nowadays Attic ceramics are also known from the sanctuaries of Marzabotto.

No other Etruscan settlement excavation (perhaps with the exception of Spina, whose settlement finds, however, are mostly unpublished) has yielded so many fragments of Attic import ceramics as Marzabotto–*Kainua*. Despite their mediocre quality and fragmentary condition, the material set forth in Baldoni's volume carries an importance that goes far beyond local and regional boundaries. It allows us to gain a representative overview of Attic ceramics present in the hinterland at a medium-sized Etruscan city. To judge by the shapes, they were evidently used in the practices of the symposia and banquets; the same vase shapes are attested in graves and in homes alike.

In some cases, unfortunately, the images are lacking in quality and the index is somewhat meager, but the book is still very useful and will encourage further study.