ALTAR AND OTHER TERRACOTTA VOLUTES FROM OLBIA PONTICA

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Abstract: The collection of architectural terracotta from Olbia Pontica contains more than a dozen terracotta architectural details with a volute at the core of their composition. One such detail comes from Borysthenes. Their analysis allowed us to identify eight fragments that probably belonged to one detail and to propose its reconstruction and interpretation as a decoration of the altar. The rest, due to their significant fragmentation, allow only a similar use to be assumed. Those volutes that could be reconstructed, at least in general terms, have close analogies in size and composition with stone altar volutes from Miletus and its vicinity, as well as its Pontic colonies, particularly Histria. Against this background, the collection of terracotta altar volutes from the Olbia-Borysthenes region is unique and has no analogies yet.

Rezumat: Colecţia de ceramică arhitectonică de la Olbia Pontica conţine peste douăsprezece detalii de arhitectură din ceramică, care au o volută în centrul compoziţiei, un astfel de detaliu provenind din Boristene. Analiza acestora a dus la identificarea a opt fragmente care probabil au aparţinut unui unic detaliu şi la propunerea de reconstruire şi interpretare drept decoraţie pentru un altar. Celelalte, din cauza fragmentării lor semnificative, permit doar presupunerea unui uz similar. Acele volute care au putut fi reconstruite cel puţin în general au analogii apropiate ca dimensiune şi compoziţie volutelor de altar din piatră din Milet şi vecinătăţile sale, precum şi celor din coloniile Pontice, Histria în particular. Luând în considerare aceste aspecte, colecţia de volute ceramice de altar din regiunea Olbia-Boristene este unică şi nu are analogii până la acest moment.

This article continues the series of publications of numerous fragments of late Archaic architectural terracotta found in Olbia Pontica. While working with this collection, I could select fragments of details with a volute in their composition. They differ from the terracotta palmette *akroteria* that crowned the ridge of the temple on the Western Temenos,[1] both in their size and decorative design. Most of the details discussed below were also found on the territory of the Western temenos; one detail comes from the territory of the Eastern temenos, and one was found during excavations at Borysthenes (now Berezan Island). All the details are characterised by a high degree of fragmentation, which, even at the present stage of their study, does not allow us to propose such reconstructions that would not be subject to revision or partial correction in the future. Nevertheless, it is necessary to start such work in order to present, at least in sketch form, the constructive and artistic level of the monuments erected in Olbia in the late Archaic period.

A method already proved in similar works was used to reconstruct a series of Olbian terracotta volutes. All the details involved in the reconstruction were analysed in terms of their dimensions, first of all, the thickness of the pieces and the dimensions of the volutes, the particulars of the profiling, as well as the visual characteristics of the clay and the combination of decorative elements and paint coating. I also considered possible variants of the composition of the pieces that contained volutes – with one (frontal location) or two (angular location) relief façades.

It seems necessary to emphasise that the experience of reconstructing the Olbian details containing volutes was acquired mainly due to the existing works of my predecessors on the reconstruction of terracotta and stone architectural details from the primary monuments of the *metropolia*, first of all from Miletus and its Pontic colonies. I would like to note the works devoted to the details of the Archaic time, which are fundamental for Olbia. It was on these examples that the methodology of such reconstructions was worked out, and the architectural details found in these centres provide the most significant number of analogies. The architectural development of the *metropolia* and Olbia in the late Archaic period had developed according to one algorithm.

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