

LATE-ARCHAIC TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN OLBIA PONTICA II: THE AKROTERIA WITH GORGONEIA

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Key words: Olbia Pontica, temple, architectural terracotta, gorgoneion, disk akroterion.

Abstract: This paper is about the studying and further reconstruction of two central akroteria of Laconian type with the depiction of Medusa Gorgona. The gorgoneia were the top decorations of the temple of the main Olbian sacred patron, Apollo Ietros, as it is visible from the *graffito* on one side. The temple was erected at the Western temenos in Pontic Olbia during the second half of the 6th century BCE. The synchronous analogues known in the Mediterranean centres allow for the proposition of two versions of akroterion design – a rectangular form with a circular top, and a fully circular form of a disk-shape akroterion. The disk akroterion was fixed with the help of the ridge tile that had slopes of *c.* 23-24°, that differ from those known in the Mediterranean. All the details belong to the South Ionian imports transported to Olbia in a special order, that allows for the discussion about a local direction in the architectural development.

Rezumat: Acest articol este legat de studiul și continuarea reconstrucției a două piese akroterion centrale de tip Laconian, ce o înfățișează pe Meduza Gorgona. Gorgonele erau elementele decorative din vârful templului principalului patron sacru al Olbiei, Apollo Ietros, așa cum rezultă din grafitto-ul de pe lateral. Templul a fost ridicat în temenosul vestic al Olbiei Pontice, în timpul celei de-a doua jumătăți a secolului 6 a.Ch. Analogiile din aceeași perioadă cunoscute în centrele mediteraneene duc la două propuneri de reconstrucții pentru fiecare akroterion – o formă rectangulară cu partea de sus rotunjită, și respectiv o formă circulară, pentru un akroterion în formă de disc. Akroterionul în formă de disc era fixat cu ajutorul țiglelor de coamă, cu pante de 23-24 de grade, diferite de cele cunoscute în zona mediteraneană. Toate detaliile lor țin de stilul specific importurilor din Ionia de Sud, transportate în Olbia în baza unei comenzi speciale, ceea ce permite purtarea unei discuții referitoare la o direcție locală în dezvoltarea arhitecturală.

This article presents a part of the collection of painted architectural terracotta pieces from Olbia Pontica, containing many unique decorative façade items used in the building of temples during the late-Archaic to early-Classical times. Until nowadays, this collection has not been published completely, and is still being studied. In this paper I draw attention to three broken terracotta fragments that were attributed to the frontal disk akroterion with the depiction of Medusa Gorgona.¹ This attribution, correct in general, didn't yet lead to the necessary graphic reconstruction. Its absence until now did not allow for the understanding of the design of the architectural decoration of the temple, moreover, the important details of the akroterion construction started to be discussed. All these became reasons for my interest in these pieces, that deserve their own special study and publication.

Fragment A presents the upper part of a circular Gorgon's mask (fig. 1, 1).² A part of her forehead with one curved snake moulded in relief and the traces (the negatives) of two other snakes are preserved. All snakes are turned to the left and frame the forehead; at the right side of the rightmost snake a minor trace of a damaged element is preserved (the meaning of which will be made clear below). Two narrow convex bands and one wide convex and irregular band with a decorative framing are around the head. This outer band consists of Ionian *cymation* moulded in low relief and the crowning framing that is also slightly curved. Both façades, the frontal and the back, are fully covered in a yellowish slip, 2.5Y 8/3, thicker on the frontal side. The preserved part of the front is painted with black. This colour is used for underlining all the decorative motifs moulded in relief, but the different parts of the mask are covered in a different manner, the paint being applied in various thicknesses. The different thickness of the black colour gives the variety of shades, from fully black to brownish red.

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¹ Rusaeva 1986, p. 32, 43, fig. 3, 8; Rusaeva 1988, pp. 43-44, fig. 10, 1-2; Kryzhitskii, Rusaeva, Nazarchuk 2005, p. 9-10, pl. I, 4-5; Kryzhitskii, Rusaeva, Nazarchuk 2006, pp. 103-104, fig. 98, 1-2. Despite the number of publications, the three pieces have never been published together.

² Inv. No O-79/AGD/669, Deposits of the Institute of Archaeology, NAS of Ukraine.