



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH
ON POTTERY OF THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD E.V.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

The *International Association for Research on Pottery of the Hellenistic Period (IARPotHP)*

announces its

8th CONFERENCE

**ECONOMIES AND SOCIAL HISTORIES FROM THE AGE OF
ALEXANDER III TO MITHRIDATES VI (323–63 BC):**

THE CONTRIBUTION OF HELLENISTIC POTTERY

CONSTANȚA, 22nd-25th OF JUNE 2027

The period between the death of Alexander III (323 BC) and that of Mithridates VI (63 BC) is characterized by the progressive political fragmentation of the kingdoms that emerged from Alexander's conquests, the intensification of conflicts, and the reconfiguration of economic networks. This period sees the transformation of the Greek world until the gradual establishment of Roman hegemony in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Pontic region.

These profound transformations are frequently reflected in the production and circulation of ceramics. The multiplication of production centres, resulting from the breakup of political structures and the evolution of exchange networks, led to a diversification of technical and stylistic traditions, often accompanied by a degree of standardization or a decline in the quality of certain productions. This evolution calls for a reassessment of the very notion of Hellenistic pottery "koine", traditionally understood as the expression of a relatively homogeneous material culture throughout the Hellenistic world.

The study of ceramics from this period therefore provides a privileged perspective for analysing the economic, social, and cultural transformations that accompanied the transition from a polycentric Hellenistic world to an area progressively integrated under Roman rule. It was only with the establishment of Roman imperial administration that a greater territorial unification was achieved, together with the development of an integrated Mediterranean economy and the widespread circulation of common ceramic productions throughout the provinces of the Empire.

Topics of the conference

1. The diffusion of shared ceramic models and production practices

The period extending from Alexander III to Mithridates VI was characterized by profound political and economic instability, which affected the security of commercial routes and had a significant impact on ceramic production systems. This period witnessed the strengthening of



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regional networks and the emergence of forms of proto-industrial production, reflecting new patterns of manufacture, distribution, and consumption.

The circulation and reuse of ceramic moulds may be considered as one of the mechanisms contributing to a certain degree of cultural and technological cohesion across fragmented territories through the diffusion of shared models and production practices. However, this phenomenon appears to have remained limited to a restricted range of ceramic categories, particularly mould-made relief bowls and oil lamps. The study of these productions provides valuable insights into the relationship between technological transfer, economic organization, and the circulation of artistic and commercial models within the Hellenistic world.

2. Administration, resource management, and the organization of production and networks in the new regions created after Alexander III

The study of workshop organization, including the management of resources, the selection of models, and the mechanisms of production and distribution, is essential for understanding how ceramic traditions were developed, adapted, and disseminated throughout the Hellenistic world. These processes contributed to the emergence and consolidation of local productions while simultaneously raising important methodological questions concerning the identification of ceramic categories as local or regional, whether these attributions are based on established evidence or remain hypothetical.

Moreover, the regional or supra-regional dimension of certain ceramic forms has to be considered. Some shapes acquired a wide cultural and commercial significance beyond their production areas, whereas others appear to have been associated with more restricted regional contexts.

The presence of specialized ceramic workshops producing goods intended for long-distance circulation, such as transport amphorae, raises fundamental questions regarding the degree of openness of production areas and their integration into regional and supra-regional commercial networks. Similarly, Pergamene ceramics with applied decoration demonstrate how ceramic production could function as a medium for expressing regional identity, closely connected with the political and cultural history of the Kingdom of Pergamon.

A major objective of future research is therefore the establishment of a typological and analytical repertoire of ceramic forms capable of distinguishing between three complementary levels of circulation and significance: local, regional, and supra-regional. Such an approach would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Hellenistic economies, cultural identities, and exchange networks.

3. Economic and social challenges in the Hellenistic production centers

The study of ceramics in relation to the broader economic and social challenges of the period provides a valuable framework for understanding the transformations affecting Hellenistic production systems. Issues such as monetary devaluation resulting from the increasing circulation of bronze coinage, imbalances in the allocation and management of resources, the decline or disappearance of certain urban centres, and the emergence of new settlements all contributed to reshaping patterns of production, distribution, and consumption.

By examining ceramic evidence alongside these wider historical processes, it becomes possible to assess how economic instability, demographic changes, and political reconfigurations influenced technological choices, workshop organization, and regional production strategies. Hellenistic ceramics thus represent not only a reflection of changing economic conditions but also an important indicator of social adaptation and transformation within the Mediterranean and Black Sea worlds.

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4. New esthetic values

The different rhythms and specific trajectories of change observed in painted and overpainted ceramics throughout the Hellenistic world demonstrate the formation of distinct regional traditions and production centres. Various regional “schools” illustrate the dynamic interaction between the circulation of common Hellenistic models and the development of local identities expressed through ceramic production. Moreover, the widespread distribution of mould-made bowls reflects the emergence of new economic strategies, adapted to large-scale production and expanded markets.

5. Ceramic production as a medium of royal propaganda

Ceramic objects could function as instruments of royal representation and ideological communication, serving as material supports for the expression and legitimization of sovereign power. Through carefully conceived forms, elaborate decorative programmes, and symbolic imagery, pottery played an active role in the dissemination of political messages and the construction and articulation of royal identities. Decorated ceramic vessels bearing mythological, religious, or dynastic imagery constituted important media for the visual expression of royal ideology. Through their iconographic repertoires, these objects articulated notions of divine favour, military success, legitimacy, prestige, and dynastic continuity, thereby contributing to the consolidation of the symbolic authority of the ruling dynasty. By circulating beyond elite contexts and entering everyday practices, these objects provided a means through which royal imagery and ideological messages could reach broader audiences.

6. Synchronizing regional chronologies and redefining historical transitions

A major research challenge addressed by this theme concerns the synchronization of regional chronologies and the need to reassess historical transitions according to the specific trajectories of individual regions. The conventional division between the Hellenistic and Roman periods does not correspond to a uniform chronological reality across the Mediterranean and Black Sea worlds. Political, economic, and cultural transformations occurred at different rhythms depending on local historical contexts, patterns of interaction, and the degree of integration into emerging Roman networks.

There is, therefore, a necessity to move beyond a linear model of historical change and to adopt regionally differentiated chronological frameworks. Ceramic evidence provides a particularly valuable tool for this reassessment, as changes in production, distribution networks, and consumption patterns often reflect gradual processes of transformation rather than abrupt historical breaks. A comparative study of ceramic sequences across different regions can therefore contribute to a more precise understanding of the varied pathways through which Hellenistic societies entered the Roman world.

7. Ceramic and Scientific Intersections in a Digital Era

3D scanning technologies and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) enable the internal structure of ancient ceramic artefacts to be investigated through non-invasive and non-destructive methods. Missing elements can likewise be digitally reconstructed and subsequently reproduced using 3D printing, thereby facilitating the restoration and conservation of archaeological materials. The application of computed tomography (CT) for non-invasive analysis, combined with the digital reconstruction and 3D printing of missing



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components, represents a significant development in the conservation and preservation of ancient artefacts.

Via this topic we want to motivate participants to communicate case studies that showcase the way, in which these research tools can be useful for the study of any of the topics detailed above and for the overall progression of the study of Hellenistic pottery.

Finally, we strongly encourage participants to propose panels, which could investigate a topic of their preference in a more detailed and thorough manner. Depending on the total number of presenters, participants in a panel may not be able to present a paper in any of the other sessions too.

The languages of the conference are – as in previous meetings – English, French, German, and Italian.

NOTE: English is the only accepted language for abstracts, as well as for the captions in Power Points

For those wishing to present a paper or a poster, as well as those interested in organizing a special panel, please send a completed registration form and a short abstract (max. 500 words) in English, French, German or Italian by December 31, 2026, to:

conf8@iarpothp.org

Further information on the conference and a registration form are available on our homepage

<https://iarpothp.org/conferences/>

Early bird registration fee: The conference fee for non-IARPotHP members is 60€ due March 31st, 2027. For later payments, the conference fee will be raised to 80€. Payment details will be announced later. It should be noted that the conference fee is waived only for IARPotHP members, who have paid their Association fees (including the calendar year 2027) by April 30th, 2027.

The conference is organized by the Institute for South-Eastern European Studies of the Romanian Academy and the National History and Archaeology Museum of Constanța.

The Organizing Committee:

Dr. Vasilica Lungu (Institute for South-Eastern European Studies of the Romanian Academy)

Dr. Irina Sodoleanu (National History and Archaeology Museum, Constanța)

Dr. Constantin Băjenaru (National History and Archaeology Museum, Constanța)The



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The Scientific Committee:

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Dr. Guy Ackermann (University of Geneva, Board of IARPotHP)

Dr. Zoi Kotitsa (Independent Researcher, Board of IARPotHP)

Dr. Alexandros Laftsidis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki / CReA-Patrimoine, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Board of IARPotHP)

Dr. Edyta Marzec (PCMA University of Warsaw, NCSR Demokritos, Fitch Laboratory BSA, Board of IARPotHP)

Dr. Natacha Massar (Royal Museums of Art and History, Board of IARPotHP)

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