

SOME RARE LATE ROMAN FINE WARES DISCOVERED IN THE CENTRAL SECTOR OF THE LATE ROMAN CITY AT HISTRIA

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Rezumat: Câteva fragmente ceramice descoperite în cursul sondajelor pentru identificarea bazilicii C din sectorul central al Histriei romane târzii ilustrează importuri rare precum Cypriot Red Slip Ware și ceramică locală din zona Constantinopolis, precum și unele variante puțin cunoscute ale producțiilor micro-asiatice (Light-Colored Ware și Late Roman C).

Abstract: Some pottery fragments found during excavations of "Basilica C" in the Central Sector of Late Roman Histria show rare imports (Cypriot Red Slip Ware and local pottery from Constantinople hinterland) and some less known variants of Asia Minor productions (Light-Colored Ware and Late Roman C).

100 years after the beginning of archaeological research at Histria the current state of research on Late Roman fine ware imports is far behind the more recently excavated sites (see for example Topraichioi and Halmyris). Broadly speaking, neglecting the pottery studies (especially in their archaeological context and not only as a typological approach) is a constant of West-Pontic archaeology, which is reflected in too general and sometimes misleading chronological frameworks.

With this minor contribution some less common fine pottery types found in the Late Roman contexts from archaeological sites on the Western coast of the Black Sea are put into circulation. The fragments were found in 2003-2004 during excavations focused on identifying the Basilica C¹, preceding the great episcopal basilica from the Central Sector of the Late Roman city.

Unfortunately, only the first two fragments appeared in a somewhat

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¹ BĂJENARU 2003-2005.

homogenous context in terms of quantity and representativity, clearly dated in the second half of the 5th century (pl. 2). The other five pieces were found in very limited soundings, but within stratigraphic sequences which yielded some dating elements (even if these are sometimes in a too large timespan).

1. Late Roman D / Cypriot Red Slip Ware Hayes form 2

Context: "2003 / η' south / -0,15 under schist pavement".

Second half of the 5th century. See context on pl. 2.

Rim diameter: 26 cm. Orange-brown clay, white limestone particles (including some big particles), self slip, beige discoloured rim. Two grooves on the rim, rouletting on the outer wall. Pl. 1/1, 3/1.

J. W. Hayes² established the beginning of this typical LRD form "around 450", as an imitation of African Red Slip Ware form 84. H. Meyza³ and P. Reynolds⁴ proposed a closer connection with form 83. The Histrian fragment is undoubtedly a product of "early series" (cf. Hayes 1972), the parallels allowing a chronological framing in the third quarter of the 5th century. The best analogies for our fragment are illustrated in the finds from Abu Mena⁵, Athens⁶, Corinth⁷, Nea Paphos⁸ and Beirut⁹. P. Reynolds observed some differences between these early products ("double grooves on the rim, careful rouletting on the wall, a pronounced, if short, foot") and the latter ones, dated in the late 5th - early 6th century ("spaced, poor rouletting on the outer wall and light grooving on the rim")¹⁰.

The scarcity of LRD products did not allow their individualization in the main work of synthesis about the late Roman pottery in the province of Scythia¹¹. However, it is possible that one sherd from Halmyris published by A. Opaït and resumed by F. Topoleanu¹² could be recognized as LRD rather than a Pontic or Asia Minor production. The fragment from Halmyris was recorded on N9 level, dated in the second half of the 5th century¹³, which matches the general type dating. It must be stressed here that some fragments from Iatrus, identified by its publisher as Cypriot Red Slip Ware products¹⁴, don't have anything in common with this fine ware category.

² HAYES 1972, p. 375.

³ MEYZA 2007, p. 52.

⁴ REYNOLDS 2011 a, p. 57.

⁵ HAYES 1972, p. 373, nr. 1, fig. 80/1.

⁶ HAYES 1972, p. 373, nr. 2, fig. 80/2 = HAYES 2008, nr. 1422 (Agora deposits dated c. 460-475 AD).

⁷ SLANE & SANDERS 2005, assemblage 1, p. 251, nr. 13, fig. 3 (last coin 450-457) - deposit dated by the authors in the first half of the 5th century, but more probably could be redated after mid-5th century, cf. REYNOLDS *et al.* 2011, p. 19.

⁸ MEYZA 2007, H2 cat. no. 7, pl. 4/H2,2.

⁹ REYNOLDS 2011 b, deposits BEY 006 9023, 3761, 9402, 7477, p. 208, figs. 1/6-11, 2/30,31, 3/43, 4/52-55 (third quarter of the 5th century).

¹⁰ REYNOLDS 2011 a, p. 60; REYNOLDS 2011 b, p. 215.

¹¹ OPAÏT 2004.

¹² OPAÏT 1991, p. 165, nr. 304, pl. 44 = TOPOLEANU 2000, p. 56, nr. 75, pl. VIII.

¹³ TOPOLEANU 2000, p. 247-248.

¹⁴ CONRAD 2007, p. 230-231, Abb. 28.

2. Constantinople? "Early Local" Red Slip Ware

Context: "2003 / η' south / -0,15 under schist pavement".

Second half of the 5th century. See context on pl. 2.

Rim diameter: 16 cm. Reddish-brown clay, white particles, mica, self slip on interior, beige-grey discoloured portion on the exterior of rim. Pl. 1/2, 3/2.

A preliminary identification of a couple of currently less known tableware categories has been made by John Hayes after examining the material coming out of the excavations at Saraçhane in Istanbul. This is the case with a class of "local" red-slip wares which came to light in deposits dated in the late 6th and 7th century¹⁵, but also with other "Early Local Fabrics" found in the earliest deposits on the site¹⁶. Similar sherds with the Histrian one are recorded in Constantinopolitan 5th century contexts (deposits 7 and 10)¹⁷, where at least two variants of rim finishing can be observed, one with a hollow inside, just like the fragment illustrated here.

This is the second fragment of this type found at Histria. The first was discovered in the same Central sector, appearing most probably as residual in a late 6th - early 7th century context (V A level)¹⁸.

Although the Romanian researchers have not clearly individualized so far this "Early Local" category, I think that two other published fragments from Halmyris and (L)Ibida belong to it. In the first case¹⁹, the fragment was doubtfully recorded on N7 level (dated in the second half of the 4th century) and typologically undetermined (Opaiț) or misinterpreted (Topoleanu). In the second case²⁰, the stratigraphic context is not clearly defined and, above all, the fragment is wrongly considered "Early Pontic Red Slip" of 2nd-3rd century date, although it is clear that it was found in a Late Roman context (a 4th-5th century building)²¹.

3. Late Roman "Light-Colored Ware" Ergürer form 6

Context: "2003 / θ' / walking level with chipped stones (construction fill atrium episcopal basilica?)".

First half of the 6th century.

¹⁵ HAYES 1968, p. 212, nos. 87-99, fig. G. See also HAYES 1992, p. 8. This type of vessel appears also in Scythia, at Histria and Halmyris (cf. OPAIȚ 2004, p. 80, pl. 60/5-6).

¹⁶ HAYES 1992, p. 5.

¹⁷ HAYES 1992, p. 92-93, deposit 7, no. 1 ("marbled" ware, fine, slightly flaky orange-red clay, orange-red slip (band inside rim, marbling on floor); interior brush-smoothed) and deposit 10, nr. 4 (orange-red clay, thin slip on interior only), fig. 31/7.1, 10.4.

¹⁸ SUCEVEANU 1982, p. 97, no. 7, fig. 14/7. The rim diameter is larger (28 cm).

¹⁹ OPAIȚ 1991, p. 166, nr. 315, pl. 46 = TOPOLEANU 2000, p. 60, nr. 99, pl. XI. The parallels made by Topoleanu with Thasos are totally inaccurate.

²⁰ MOCANU 2014, p. 163, no. 9, fig. 2.

²¹ MOCANU 2014, p. 147. In the catalogue presented by the author (p. 162-166) it can be easily seen the association of this fragment in the same stratum/package ("S 0, -0,50") with no. 2, fig. 2 (which is LRC Hayes 1 and not ESC!), no. 8, fig. 2 (LRC Hayes 1, not Early Pontic Red Slip!), no. 10, fig. 2 (LRC Hayes 1/3A, not Early Pontic Red Slip!), no. 16, fig. 3 (PRS Domzalski form 7) and no. 31, fig. 4 (LRC Hayes 3A, not Hayes 4!); therefore, a dating towards the middle of the 5th century seems more plausible.

Rim diameter: 17 cm. Beige-light brown clay, mica, self slip. Deep grooves on the outer wall, rouletting on the inner wall, under the rim. Pl. 1/3, 3/3.

This ware was firstly defined by Hayes, but with fewer samples and insufficient contexts at the time to enable a clear typology²². The recent findings from Parion in Troad, where this type of pottery appeared in large quantities, have allowed a preliminary typology of this fine ware group, for which a production in the North-Eastern Aegean basin or even in the Propontis region seems now very probable²³. In the Western Pontic area the light-colored ware imports are always present in contexts of 5th-6th century date, with a slightly higher frequency for the second half of the 5th and first half of the 6th century.

The closest parallels for the Histrian example are to be found in Constantinopolis²⁴, Thasos²⁵, Priapos²⁶ and Parion²⁷.

4. Late Roman C / Phocaean Red Slip Ware Hayes form 3A/C variant.

Context: "2003 / θ' / -0,10-0,20 under witness-floor (pit)".

5th century.

Rim diameter: 36 cm. Reddish-brown clay, orange-red slip. Brush-marks on the inside part of the rim. Pl. 1/4, 3/4.

5. Late Roman C / Phocaean Red Slip Ware Hayes form 3A/C variant or form 1/3 variant (transitional?).

Context: "2004 / μ (extended trench) / -0,20-0,30 under IV A (pit? NW corner)".

5th century.

Rim diameter: 30 cm. Light brown clay, orange-red slip. Brush-marks on exterior under the rim and on the inner surface of the rim. Possible traces of burnishing. Pl. 1/5, 3/5.

Nos. 4 and 5 are two extremely rare specimens of LRC, unfortunately coming from small soundings with limited dating elements. These could be seen as variants between Hayes form 3A (distinguished by its simple carination or slight overhang under the rim on exterior) and Hayes form 3C (with typical tall vertical rim and bowl-shaped profile). The general profile of no. 5 resemble also Hayes form 1, and therefore could be interpreted maybe as a Hayes 1/3 (transitional?) form. Both fragments show a pronounced step inside between the rim and the wall²⁸ and brush traces especially on the inner surface of the rim. No parallels

²² HAYES 1968, p. 211; HAYES 1972, p. 408-410.

²³ ERGÜRER 2013, p. 145-150; ERGÜRER 2014. Until the recent finds from Parion, the most likely production area was considered the Knidos region (HAYES 1972, p. 408; HAYES 2008, p. 91; OPAIȚ 2004, p. 79). DOMŻALSKI 2012, p. 340 also takes into consideration the Pergamene region.

²⁴ HAYES 1992, p. 93, deposit 10, no. 3, fig. 31/10.3.

²⁵ ABADIE-REYNAL & SODINI 1992, p. 33, CF183, CF184, fig. 13.

²⁶ ROSE *et al.* 2007, p. 93, no. 120, pl. IX.

²⁷ ERGÜRER 2014, p. 183, no. 15, pl. 4.

²⁸ A couple of Hayes 3C pieces with this distinctive feature were found in late 5th -

were found in the available literature. More in-depth research is needed on the relationship between Hayes forms 1B-C, 3A-C and 4 due to the emergence of many intermediate variants²⁹, for which much needed chronological boundaries should be established. Labelling these forms as "transitional" or "early variants" do not provide the best image for the evolution of the ware.

6. Late Roman C / Phocaeen Red Slip Ware Hayes form 3G/10A variant.

Context: "2003 / ε' / foundation trench of wall IVB/VA (atrium)".

Second half of the 6th century.

Rim diameter: 24 cm. Orange-red clay, self-slip. Brush-marks inside. Pl. 1/6, 3/6.

7. Late Roman C / Phocaeen Red Slip Ware Hayes form 3G/10A variant.

Context: "2003 / ε' / -0,10-0,20 + ε' west / -0,05-0,20-0,30 (pit)".

Second half of the 6th century.

Rim diameter: 30 cm. Orange-red clay, self-slip. Rough surface inside, with brush-marks. Pl. 1/7, 3/7.

These last two pieces are most probably intermediate (transitional?) variants between Hayes forms 3G and 10A. A later development of Hayes form 6 could not be excluded. No clear parallels were found, the only acceptable (for no. 6) is a fragment from the redeposited AD 551 earthquake assemblages in Beirut³⁰. We need more reliable contexts from sites flooded with Phocaeen products to understand better the transition from Hayes 3 to Hayes 10.

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early 6th century deposits in Beirut (REYNOLDS 2011 b, p. 215, nos. 75, 84, fig. 6).

²⁹ See for instance some pieces from Athenian Agora (HAYES 2008, nos. 1248-1256, 1299).

³⁰ REYNOLDS 2011 b, p. 215, 228, no. 117, fig. 7 ("unclassified LRC 10A? or LRD").

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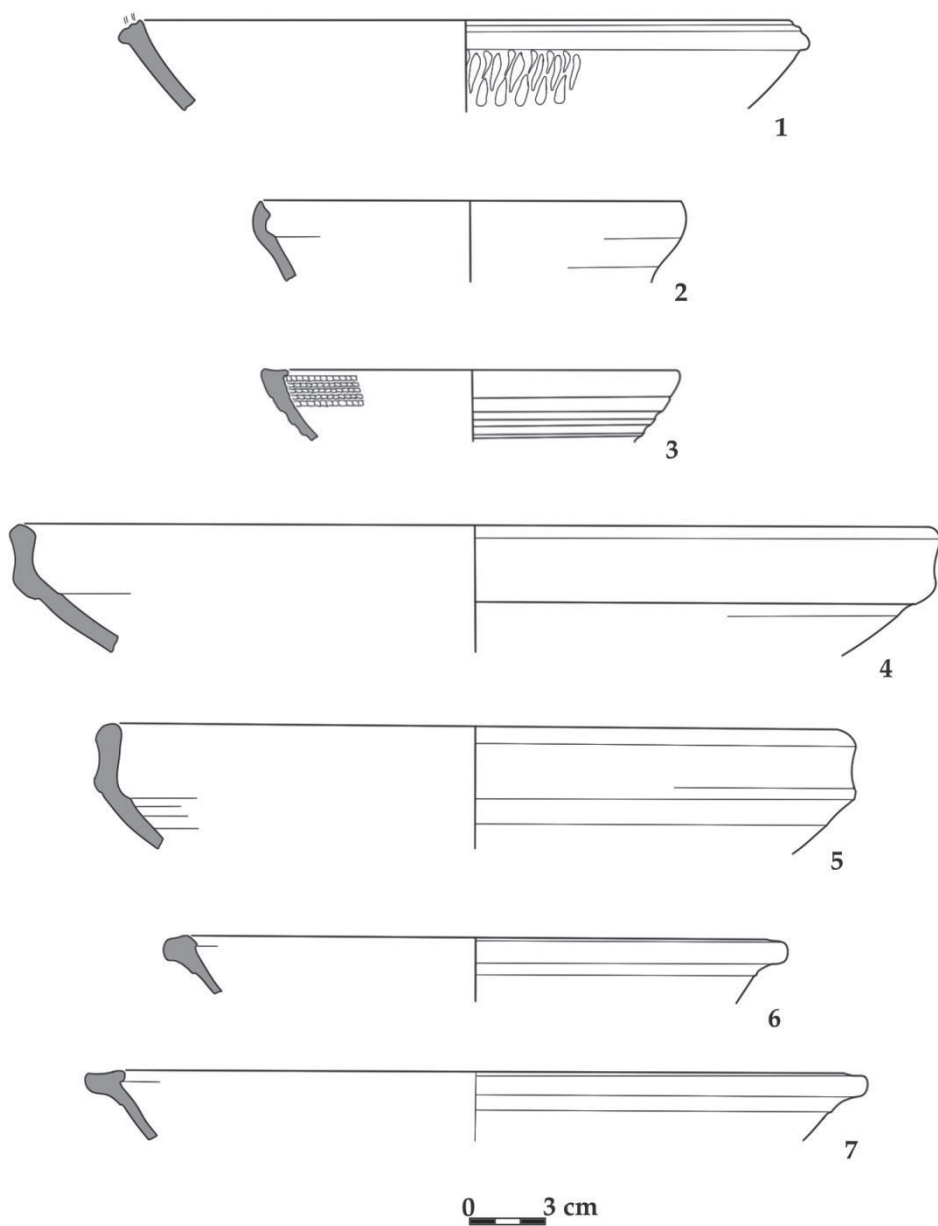
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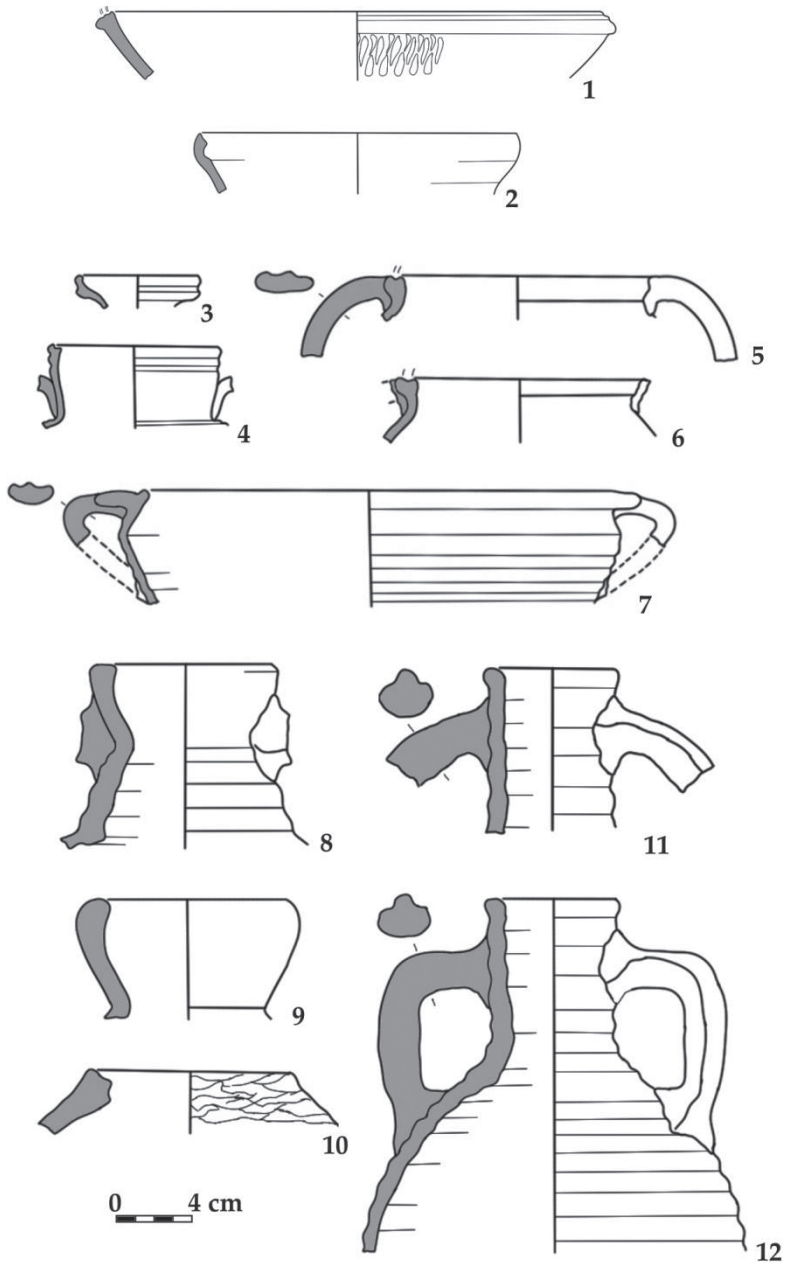
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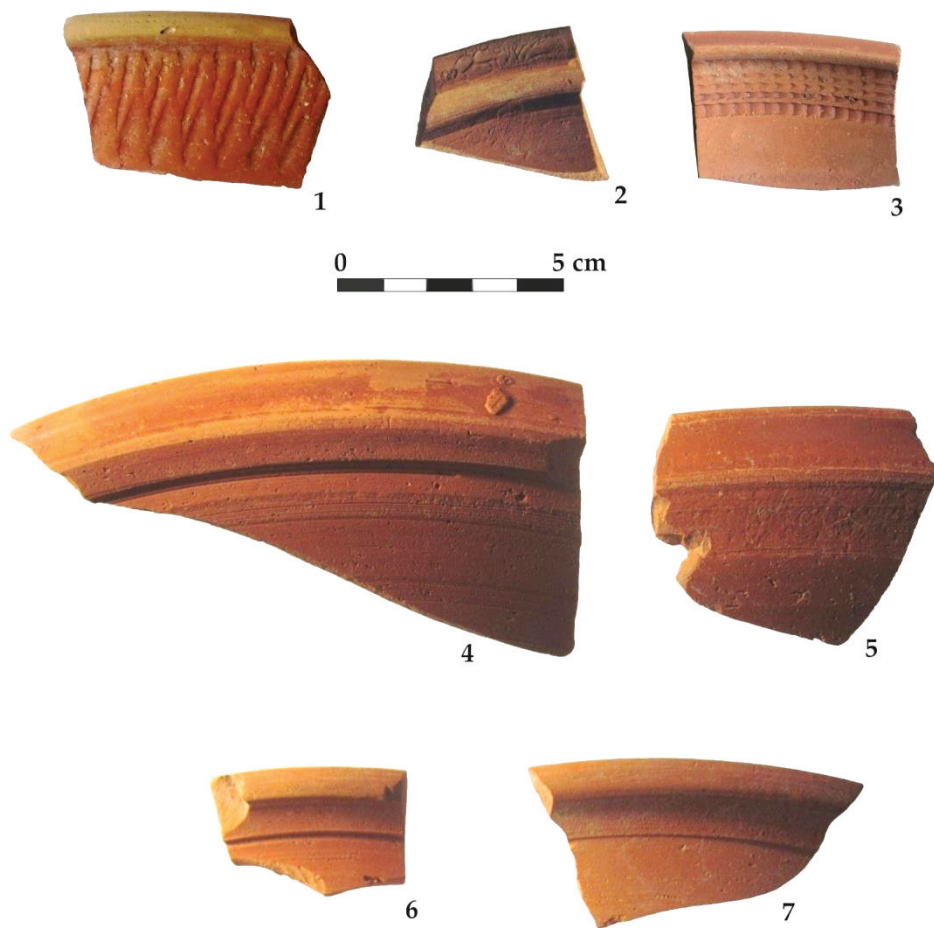


Pl. 1



Pl. 2 - Context of the second half of the 5th century

1: LRD; 2: Constantinople? Red Slip Ware; 3-4: Common wares; 5-6: Local cooking pots (Opaiț type III); 7: Imported casserole (Opaiț type II); 8: LRA 1 variant; 9: LRA 2; 10: LRA 3; 11-12: Pontic imitations of LRA 1 (Opaiț D-II).



Pl. 3