

LATE ROMAN AFRICAN RED SLIP WARE FROM THE ACROPOLIS CENTRE-SOUTH SECTOR (HISTRIA)

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Abstract: In this paper we present the North-African tableware discovered in the first four years (2013 to 2016) of archaeological excavations in the Acropolis Centre-South Sector in Histria. In smaller numbers than the Late Roman C Ware, the African Red Slip Ware is attested in this sector by 38 shards, pertaining to 7 forms with 11 types of pottery. Chronologically, the material belongs to the Late Roman period and can be dated to the 4th–7th centuries AD.

Cuvinte-cheie: Histria, Scythia, veselă de masă africană, importuri, ceramică romană târzie

Rezumat: În acest studiu este prezentată vesela de masă nord-africană descoperită în primii patru ani (între 2013 și 2016) de cercetări arheologice în Sectorul Acropolă Centru-Sud, la Histria. Nu la fel de numeroasă ca ceramica orientală, vesela de masă nord-africană este atestată în acest sector prin 38 fragmente încadrate în 7 forme și 11 tipuri ceramice. Din punct de vedere cronologic, materialul aparține perioadei romane-târzii, fiind datat între secolele IV–VII p.Chr.

INTRODUCTION

The pottery presented in this paper was discovered in the *Acropolis Centre-South Sector (ACS Sector)* in Histria during the archaeological excavations undertaken between 2013 and 2016 by the University of Bucharest's team¹. One of the main objectives of the excavation was the identification and research of a Late Roman *insula*, generally dated to the 6th century AD, with two functioning phases: the first phase generally corresponds to the first half of the 6th c., a period when many new buildings were raised in Histria, among which the most prominent is the Episcopal Basilica; the second phase, maybe following the destruction caused by the Kutrigur raid led by Zabergan in 559, is attested by many repairs and is dated by a *foliis* issued during the reign of Emperor Justin II². Most of the *insula* was uncovered in the first four years of excavation, as we identified its northern, western and eastern limits, represented by three streets – *street C* (to the North), *ST01* (to the East) and *ST02* (to the West). Also, we noticed that this building complex can be divided into two living nuclei – conventionally named the *Northern* and the *Southern nucleus* – and several rooms whose functionality is uncertain for now (Fig. 1).

Generally, the ceramic finds are numerous and varied, as in this area we discovered many vessels and shards of different periods (Greek pottery, Early and Late

Roman pottery, Byzantine pottery) and categories (storage vessels – *dolia*; *amphorae*³; cooking vessels – *vasa coquinatoria*; drinking vessels – *vasa po(ta)torica*; vessels for eating – *vasa escaria*; lamps – *lucernae*⁴).

Between 2013 and 2016 we discovered more than 500 shards which can be included in the tableware category. Concerning the areas of origin, the Phocaean Red Slip Ware⁵ is the most widespread category (c. 75% of the entire lot), followed by the African Red Slip Ware (c. 10%), the Pontic Red Slip Ware (c. 5%) and other unidentified fragments (c. 10%) (Fig. 3). The African Red Slip Ware – produced in northern and central Tunisia, in Oudhna, El Mahrine and Sidi Khalifa⁶ – is characterized by a fine or very fine reddish fabric, with fine inclusions of mica, calcite and iron oxide, by a slip of very good quality and of similar colour as the fabric, and by fine stamped or incised decoration. In the *Acropolis Centre-South Sector*, this category is attested by 38 fragments, pertaining to the following forms and types: Hayes 61 – Type A, Hayes 67 (and a variant), Hayes 99 – Types A, B, C and variants, Hayes 103 – Type A, Hayes 104 – Type B, Hayes 105 and Hayes 109.

I. Hayes 61 Form, Type A

General description of the type: shallow plate, with incurved or vertical rim and an external sharp angle

¹ For the preliminary results of this excavation, see Bottez *et alii* 2015. For the coins discovered in this sector, see Vilcu, Țârlea 2016.

² Vilcu, Țârlea 2016, no. 20, p. 163–164.

³ Bădescu, Bivolaru 2015.

⁴ Bădescu, Bottez 2014; Bivolaru, Bottez 2016.

⁵ Bădescu, Iliescu 2016; Iliescu *et alii* 2017.

⁶ Bonifay 2004, p. 47–49, Fig. 22.