

NB – unedited conference abstract

Antioch region and Pergamon: two ways towards the emergence of terra sigillata

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The paper will focus on the transition from the “Attic type” black-gloss pottery distributed throughout the early Hellenistic oikumene to establishing first the large-scale production of terra sigillata. Two production centres begun to manufacture the highest class table vessels of standardized shapes covered with red slip, which can be called terra sigillata, in the second half of the 2nd century BC: the first one producing the so-called Eastern Sigillata A, located hypothetically in north-western Syria (the region of Antioch on the Orontes), and the second one was Pergamon where production was confirmed by the discoveries of numerous kilns and wasters in the Ketios valley. Models of the discussed transition were different in the two production centres.

The most innovative was the emergence of the Eastern Sigillata A. This pottery group begun to be manufactured almost *ex nihilo*, without any known, long-lasting production of what we can identify as its direct forerunner. The identified black, mostly undecorated, version of the Eastern Sigillata A, called “black slip predecessor” was produced in rather small quantities or/and in a short period of time only, as its presence at Levantine archaeological sites and beyond is insignificant. The rapid switch from the black vessels to the mass-produced red ones was preceded by the presence in the region of so-called colour-coated pottery. The earliest colour-coated, two-tone (black and red), exclusively undecorated vessels of open shapes came from Rhodes from the early 3rd century BC onwards, but in the early 2nd century BC they were supplanted in the Levant by the new, regional group of uniform red colour-coated vessels, also undecorated and of open shapes. These vessels found in Beirut were recently named by S. Elaigne “red slip predecessor”. The same vessels were identified by the present author at the nearby Porphyreon. The importance of the discussed group for the emergence the Eastern Sigillata A is unquestionable (very few basic standardized forms of mostly open shapes in both groups), but the first chemical analyses of the samples taken from vessels found at Porphyreon did not confirm that both wares were manufactured in the same centre and therefore the name “red slip predecessor” could be misleading. On the other hand, influence of the Campana A Ware imported to the Eastern Mediterranean from Italia, shown in some vessel forms and in the modest decoration (stamping) of Eastern Sigillata A vessels can be seen as well.

A completely different model of transition is exemplified by the Pergamene Sigillata, where the emergence of first uniform red vessels was preceded by a rich and long-lasting production of black gloss and bicoloured (black and red) vessels, including splendid West Slope style decorated ones. It is interesting to note that the two-tone effect can be observed in two versions: black outside and red inside (firing in compact stacks, typical also for the Rhodian colour-coated vessels), as well as showing different colours on both sides of the exterior. It looks that the Pergamene Sigillata, being also possibly influenced by the large-scale production of the Rhodian colour-coated vessels, followed a more gradual and traditional path towards vessels called terra sigillata, continuing and developing production of decorated vessels with a significant share of closed forms (with applique as well as “West Slope” painted and scratched motifs), also in the uniform red version.

The discussed process will be exemplified by numerous finds from the Eastern Mediterranean (Beirut, Porphyreon, Gindaros; mostly Eastern Sigillata A and its predecessors) and

the Black Sea region (Pergamene Ware). Chronological aspects of the changes will be also presented.