

NB – UNEDITED CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Local ceramic production in the Bosporan kingdom (2nd and 1st centuries BC)

by Denis Zhuravlev

Unfortunately the situation with local Hellenistic pottery of the Bosporan kingdom is not as clear as in many other centers of Asia Minor. There are only a few kilns of the Hellenistic period, the finds of wasted pottery are unique, and the archaeometric studies are just in the beginning. So we do not have many possibilities for distinguishing local ceramic production both European and Asian Bosphorus.

Table ware and lamps: sanctuary production. A considerable amount of stamps IE on table ware of different types is known at the territory of Asian Bosphorus. Some of these finds come from the sanctuary at the settlement situated not far from the village “Za Rodiny”, next to the Taman’ *tolos* excavated by N.I.Sokolskiy.

A complex found by N.P.Sorokina presented a yard, covered with stone pavement with the square no less that 600 sq.m, and surrounded with premises looking like a gallery from West and East.

Table and kitchen ware of rather bad quality obviously intended for local consumption with stamps IE prevailed among ceramic objects. Similar stamps are known also at other sites of Asian Bosphorus situated nearby, first of all in Kepoi. It is interesting to note, that part of these finds in Kepoi was grouped around the sanctuary of Aphrodites. N.I.Sokolskii and later N.P.Sorokina supposed that these stamps were produced in a special workshop (or in several workshops) of the sanctuary and presented the abbreviation of the word ἱερόν or ἱερόσ. Production of this ware can be traced in the 3rd – 2nd century BC and ceased in the first half of the 2nd century BC when the *tolos* was destroyed.

In the late 2nd – early 1st century BC local production of relief pottery appeared in the Bosporan kingdom as well. Bosporan relief bowls were made of dark grey clay with lime inclusions. This group of pottery is a subject of the paper of N.Zhuravleva.

At the same time **Bosporan sigillata** was produced in one or several centres of the Bosporan kingdom. Since the mid 2nd century BC almost all the workshops re-orientated their production to the fashionable red glazed ware.

This pottery is made of typical local clay — reddish-brown with plenty of lime. The glaze covering these vessels is brownish-red and the lower part of the vessel is not always covered with it. Hellenistic Bosporan sigillata was distinguished by K.Domzalski who based on the materials from Bosporan cities Nymphaion and Tanais.

The finds of this kind of pottery are rather common in the European and Asian parts of the Bosporan kingdom and it has to be noted that in the strata of the late Hellenistic period this group of vessels makes 70 — 80 % of all the table ware. Some of Bosporan vessels were decorated with *rouletting*, as well as with palmette.

The most popular form of the Bosporan sigillata were plates on foot ring, with rim turned inside. It is very interesting to note the difference in diameters of these vessels is from 15 to 70 cm. Among other vessels cups of conical shape with handles on vertical rim were widely spread in the region. There are numerous cups covered with red slip as well as with black glaze. At the territory of the Bosporan kingdom there were many finds of this form. These cups are also very similar to Knidian ones and Pergamene Form T2 as well. The derivatives of this form are known even in the layers of the 1st century AD.

Right now it is difficult to be quite sure, but we can suppose that production of Bosporan sigillata appeared not later than the middle of the 2nd century B.C. and continued till

the end of the 1st century B.C., perhaps even till the middle of the 1st century A.D., when it was replaced by widely produced Pontic sigillata.

It is interesting that there are contexts of the second quarter of the 1st century BC in Pantikapaion which can be connected with the fire of the capital of the Bosporan kingdom in 63 BC as a result of the campaign of Pompeius against Mithridates. Both fragments of Bosporan sigillata and relief pottery of Bosporan production are found in these contexts. Fragments of Eastern sigillata A are also found in them.

It can be supposed that Eastern sigillata A spread in limited quantities in Bosphorus has influenced some forms of Bosporan sigillata. Thus, for example, Bosporan plates discussed above, are the imitations of the most widespread *ESA* Form 3.

Pantikapaion could have been one of the main producing centers, but unfortunately no workshops have been found there yet. Only a fragment of a Bosporan sigillata plate with obvious trace of waste was recently found in Pantikapaion. A series of analyses of Bosporan sigillata revealed that chemical composition of these vessels clay is very close to the one of local Pantikapaion production of the Hellenistic times (for example, of Bosporan tiles) (G.Schneider).

Here we have to note, that quality of Bosporan sigillata in general was not of the highest level. Heavy ware with thick walls of middle quality of firing did not have any decoration. As it was pointed above, only a few vessels were decorated with palmettae, and only one fragment of *dinos* decorated with lion head with a hole was recently found in the capital of the Bosporan kingdom. There is another vessel that looks like Bosporan (?), decorated with Silenos head on attash. There is no doubt that Bosporan sigillata was a cheap alternative to the more expensive imported ware, and was used by different groups of the Bosporan inhabitants.

Bosporan lamps. Jug-shaped lamps are the most wide spread type of lighting devices at Bosphorus from the 3rd century BC till the late Hellenistic time. These lamps are wheel-made; nozzled and handles were made by hand and the attached to the body. Undoubtedly it is a local type produced in Pantikapaion and perhaps in other centres of the Bosporan kingdom. It appeared in the late 4th – early 3rd century BC and existed till Roman time. Type 3 of these lamps with long nozzle is dated to the 2nd – 1st century BC.

In the 2nd and 1st centuries BC local production of new different types of lamps appeared. In the beginning local craftsmen imitated lamps of Knidian and Ephesian origin, but shortly after that some local groups appeared. Among Bosporan lamps the most impressive and interesting one are multi-nozzled lamps.

Bosporan local one-nozzled lamps were probably used as prototypes for this group. I can suppose that these groups of lighting equipment existed simultaneously during some period of time, because we found different types of lamps in the same strata layers.

As many lamps have the similar elements of decoration and the same shape I can suppose that there was the same workshop producing all the lamps and it supplied both the capital and other poleis of the state with them. Some small differences can be explained by creation of new moulds, imitating the old ones as well as by creative initiative of craftsmen. In any case all lamps after moulding need some correction by hands. The fact that clay of these lamps is similar to the one of Bosporan “Megarian” bowls and Bosporan sigillata proves the idea of local production. The predomination of these lamps at Bosphorus during the late Hellenistic period also testifies to their local origin.

Multi-nozzled lamps of the types described above are known only at the territory of the Bosporan kingdom (there is no information about the finds of such lamps from the other sites). The most of the finds come from Pantikapaion as well as from the territory of European Bosphorus - Mirmekion, Ilurat, Zenon Chersonesos. There are some multi-nozzled lamps found in Phanagoria in the collection of the State Historical Museum, but they were made

from red clay and probably were copies of grey-clay Pantikapaion originals. A similar red slip multi-nozzled lamp was recently found in Pantikapaion as well.

Many complete and fragmentary multi-nozzled lamps were recently discovered in (at???) the building, probably belonged to the defensive system of βασιλεια of the Bosporan kings in Pantikapaion. They were found in the layers of the last period of the existing of this system (1st century BC).

In the the second half of the 1st century BC a group of lamps with volutes was the most numerous at Bosphorus. Their body has by-conic shape. Nozzle is lengthened and ones of the earliest exemplars are decorated with two stylized sprouts. Discos of lamp is rather small concave and usually without any decorations. It is often surrounded with one or several relief rollers that can also be situated around the hole for pouring oil. It is round and placed in the centre of the discos in the funnel-shaped deeping. Sometimes discos is surrounded with low roller (more often this is a characteristic feature of lamps of Roman time). Shoulders of lamp are not always ornamented and their surface is usually plain. However sometimes belt of ovo or relief lines can be placed on the shoulders. Now a great amount of these lamps from the territory of European Bosphorus is ready for publication as a part of the project for publication of the collection of lamps from Kerch.

Several lamps of this type have stamps on their bottoms. Thus the bottom of a lamp from the collection of the State Historical Museum has a monogram in low relief, while lower part of its' nozzle does the letter S, also in low relief. However this lamp has plain bottom that differs it from the most lamps of this type. One of lamps from Phanagoria also has a stamp on its' bottom – *alfa*.

One of the lamps preserving in the State Historical Museum has a stamp (?) consisting of relief Greek letters written in italics on the lower part of the body. It was impossible to restore the name of the craftsman because of the sketchy character of the inscriptions. The same stamp coming from Phanagoria has been studied by S.Kovalenko.

This type of Bosporan lamps is based on the type of lighting devices widely spread in some Mediterranean centres. Characteristic feature of the 1st century BC is appearance of almond-shaped foot ring. In the second half of the 1st century BC volutes became wide-spread on the lamps of Roman types and a channel going along the nozzle towards the oil hole can be distinguished.

Some years ago S.Kovalenko basing on the location of finds of these lamps and of the mould for producing them, coming from Phanagoria, supposed that they were produced in the capital of the Asian Bosphorus and because of this they were called “Phanagorian”. S.A. Kovalenko notes that a big series of these lamps made of grey clay is known and almost most of them come from Pantikapaion. Nowadays basing on more than 50 lamps of this type I can say that there are equal amounts of finds of red and grey lamps in Pantikapaion and other Bosporan cities. The only difference is the colour of clay, which obviously depended on the character of firing. So there is no reason to speak about local “Phanagorian” type of lamps, but we should speak about the only one Bosporan type which was probably produced both at the Asian and at the European parts of Bosphorus.

While speaking about the causes of this mass production of table ware and lamps we should not forget the fact that in the 1st cent. BC Bosporan kingdom was a part of the Mithridathes kingdom. Later direct trade connections of the North Pontic area with Eastern Mediterranean were impeded because the straits were closed and sea blockade was declared in 64 BC by Pompeus the Great who had the aim not to let trade ships to Bosphorus. We should not exclude the possibility that these events, and as the result – the absence of imported pottery for a short period of time, could have stimulated increasing of local production of table ware and of lamps as well.

In the second half of the 1st century BC Bosphorus entered the Roman epoch, with their high developed system of integration between the different parts of the Empire, exchanging production, technologies, ideas as well as people. The new economical relations put the end to mass local production of table ware in the region. Kimmerian Bosphorus was covered with the wave of the cheap high quality Pontic sigillata, produced in the still unknown centers of the Black sea. By the way, some local table ware was produced in the Bosporan kingdom in the first centuries AD, and the local lamps were the most spread group of lighting equipment until the Late Antiquity.