

Iliana Borisova-Katsarova

LATE ROMAN POTTERY WITH STAMPED DECORATION FROM SERDICA (SOFIA, BULGARIA)

The article discusses preliminary results from the study of late antique pottery known in the literature as "grey Macedonian terra sigillata", discovered during archaeological excavations in ancient Serdica, Bulgaria. The investigations show that the leading feature of these vessels – stamped decoration, is found both on vessels of grey and black surface, and on vessels of red colour. At the same time, technological features of vessels without decoration, but made of similar clay and similar surface treatment suggest that they can be grouped into a type of undecorated and decorated tableware, distributed in a large area in the Late Antique prefecture of Illyricum, but mainly in its Eastern part. Preliminary results of interdisciplinary research reveal new details about the production technology. The outlined area of distribution suggests that this ceramic complex is associated with a population engaged in mining and metallurgy, settled in these lands at the beginning of Late Antiquity.

Stamped pottery – Macedonian terra sigillata – Late Antiquity – Serdica

Introduction

The pottery discussed here is most often referred to in the literature by the term grey Macedonian terra sigillata. As is well known, this term was introduced by J. Hayes, who noted its similarities with Gallic terra sigillata grise. At that time, the main examples were from the territory of Greece and were too limited in number (Hayes 1972: 402-407). Over time, its presence has been established in many parts of the Balkan peninsula, in the Roman provinces of Macedonia, Thracia, Dacia Ripensis, Dardania (Radinović 2011: 114) as well as Dacia Mediterranea. They, except for Thrace, belong to the prefecture of Illyricum of the Late Roman Empire.

For the Bulgarian lands, this pottery has not been fully studied or analysed. There are many questions related to it and the analysis covers many issues. Therefore, I will only deal with some aspects here, drawing on materials from *Serdica*, to outline the directions of the future work.

Serdica (present-day Sofia, Bulgaria) is one of the places where stamped tableware is frequently found during archaeological excavations. It is attested in all surveys in the city in varying quantities, but regrettably there are no publications. The materials presented here come mainly from recent research around the Western gate of the ancient city, supplemented by some examples from other sites in the town (**fig. 1**). The material from the West Gate area of *Serdica* is too scarce and fragmentary to allow solid conclusions concerning the production and use of this type of pottery, but it presents some interesting forms, ornamental motifs and compositions that complement the examples already known from other Bulgarian sites. The sherds originate from secondary contexts and cannot serve to refine the dating. Some of the fragments from the site at the Western Gate and at 15 Veslets Street are

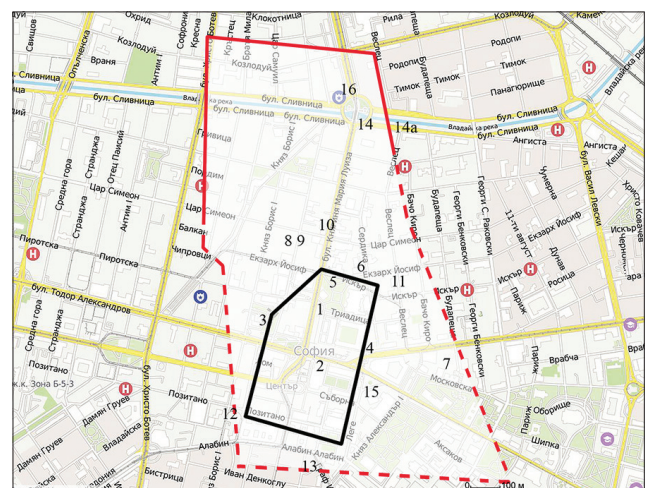


Fig. 1. Archaeological sites in Serdica, investigated during last two decades (after Borisova-Katsarova 2021). N3 – the Western gate of Serdica, N 11 – 15 Veslets Str., N 16 – 12 Tzvetan Minkov Str. – findspots of presented pottery sherds.

from a defensive ditch (Borisova-Katsarova 2020: 299-300; Meshekov and Borisova-Katsarova 2021: 697-700), which had functioned from the end of the 4th to about the middle of the 5th century AD. Those from 12 Tsvetan Minkov Str. are from a thin occupation layer without archaeological structures, dated by coins and other materials generally to the 4th-5th century AD (Borisova-Katsarova, Todorova and Petrova 2018: 256-258). Thirty-three fragments, both characteristic and uncharacteristic, were subjected to archaeometric study. Fifteen of the most diagnostic are catalogued and illustrated here (**fig. 2, 3**).

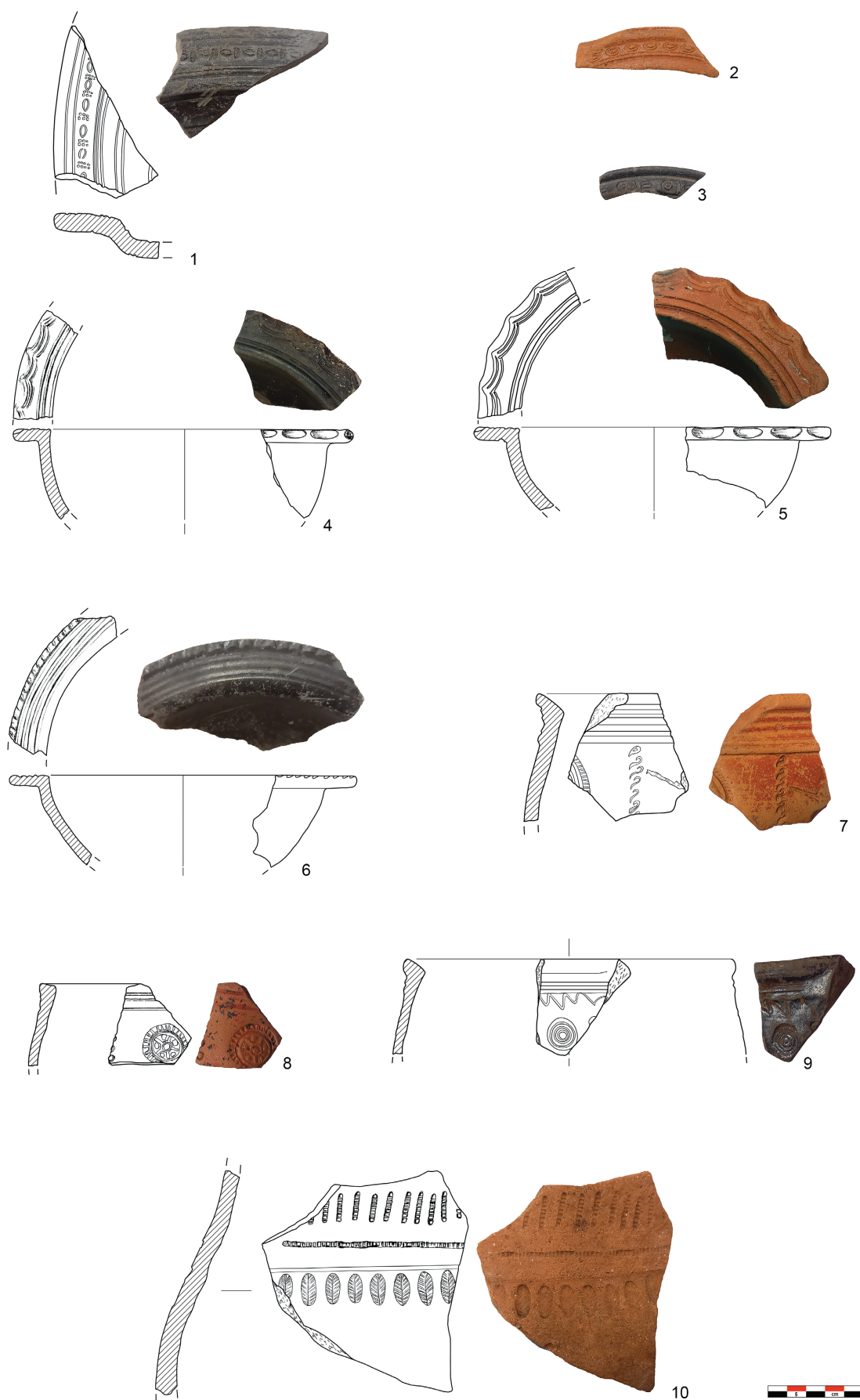


Fig. 2. Pottery sherds from the Western gate (NN 1, 3, 4, 5, 6), 15 Veslets Str. (NN 2, 7, 9, 10), 12 Tzvetan Minkov Str. (N 10) (Drawings by I. Borisova-Katsarova).

Production technology and decorative techniques

All the vessels were made on the potter's wheel, but the use of moulds for some of them cannot be excluded, especially for the decoration. The leading physical characteristic of these vessels is the stamped decoration, but other techniques were also used – incised and appliqué decoration, rouletting and casting in a mould. The vessels were fired in both reducing and oxidizing atmosphere and after firing have a grey/black and red colour on the surface (**fig. 2, 3**).

Some of the sherds are covered with a very high-quality slip, which in some cases has a silvery metallic shine.

All the vessels, both decorated and plane, show similarities in clays and surface treatment, as well as in formal characteristics.

The materials are fragmentary, lacking fully preserved vessels, but this is understandable insofar as they come from a settlement context. For this reason, certain identification of dimensions and shapes is difficult, but it is still possible to relate most of them to the established typology for this type of pottery developed for the Stoby material (Anderson-Stojanović 1992). The fragments with cat. NN 1 to 6 (**fig. 2**) undoubtedly belong to the most widespread Form 1 and Form 2, with cat. N 1 probably attributable to Form 1 (Anderson-Stojanović 1992: 66, Pl. 48. 421, 423; Stajkova 1989: fig. 2b; Radinović 2011: Pl. II, 8). Cat. NN 2 and 3 are too small to be identified with certainty and may belong to both Form 1 and Form 2 (Anderson-Stojanović 1992: 66, Pl. 48-50). Fragments with cat. NN 4, 5 and 6 belong

to Form 2, the first two are with a festooned scalloped rim (Anderson-Stojanović 1992: 67, Pl. 49-50; Radinović 2011: T. I/4; Onchevska-Todorovska 2016: T. 21). These forms were fired in a reducing as well as an oxidizing atmosphere.

Cat. NN 7, 8 and 9 are also too small for secure identification, but it is possible to refer them with some reserve to Form 9 (Anderson-Stojanović 1992: 70-71, Pl. 54). They were also fired in a reducing and oxidizing environment.

The sherd N 10 is of particular interest. It is of a large, closed vessel, pot, or pitcher, made of local clay and without additional coating on the surface (**fig. 2, 10**). The decoration is of stamped floral and geometric motifs, identical to that on the vessels with a black and red slip surface. A similar sherd was found at a site at 27 Washington Str., yet unpublished. Similar finds have been discovered in Davidovac-Gradište near Vranje (Republic of Serbia) (Radinović 2011: T. VI, 10). This, no doubt, is an indication of the local production of such ceramics, probably an imitation of more high-quality variants.

Bowls with cat. NN 11 and 12 (**figs. 3, 1-2**) appear to be a less common form. They find a quite close analogues in Davidovac-Gradište (Radinović 2011: T. III/1, 2).

Cat. N 13 could belong either to Form 9 or to the more complex Form 8 (Anderson-Stojanović 1992: 70-71, Pl. 53-54). Both are well represented among the materials from Bulgaria (Stajkova 1989: fig. 5 a, b; Mitova-Dzhonova 2006: Tabl. I b). In southeastern Serbia similar vessels are also attested in the oxidizing variant (Radinović 2011: T. III/3, VI/11). Cat. N 15 also finds a parallel on this site (Radinović 2011: T/5). Specimens of Form 8 and 9 with red-brown

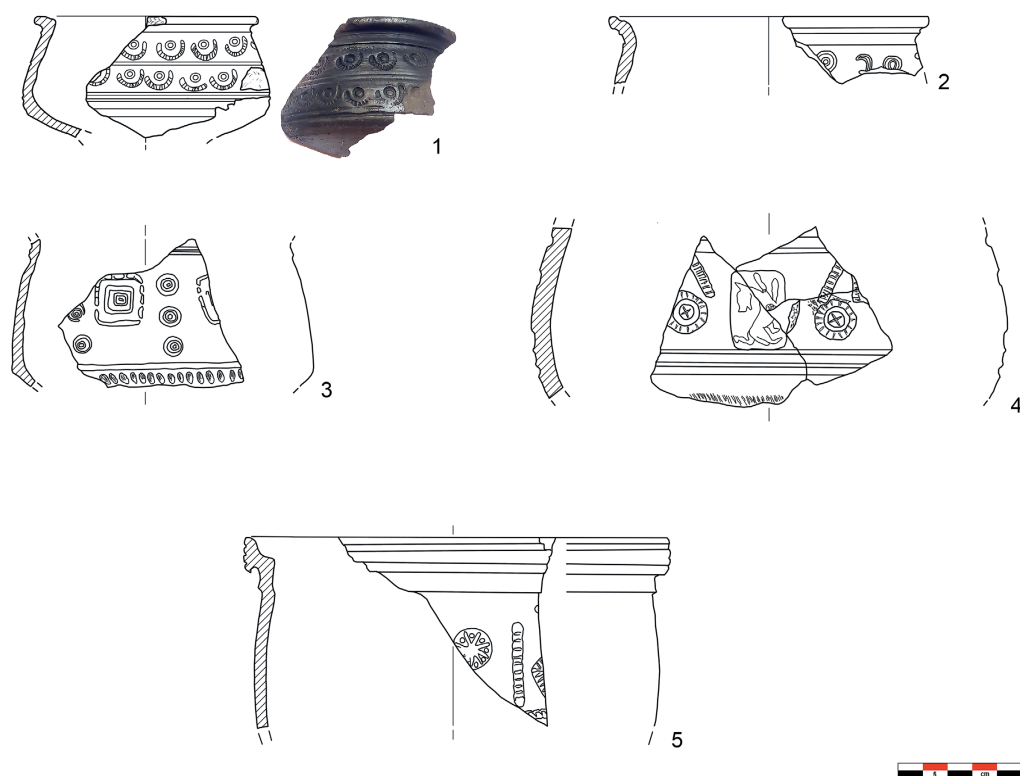


Fig. 3. Pottery sherds from 15 Veslets Str. (N 1) and the Western gate (NN 2, 3, 4, 5) with grey and black slip (Drawings by I. Borisova-Katsarova).

surface are preserved in Regional History Museum of Sofia (Museum N A 3634 and A 3635; A 3890).

Of particular interest is cat. N 14, as figural representations are rare in this type of pottery, although the form cannot be reconstructed. A vessel with a combination of relief and stamped decoration is on display at the National Archaeological Institute and Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Museum N 8008), with unknown provenance. It is a large bowl with a cylindrical upper part and a conical lower part, in the upper part of which is a band of diagonally arranged rectangular fields in which there are relief images of a running dog. Between these fields diagonal rows of concentric circles are placed. A vessel with images of dolphins is known from the village of Kravev dol, Pernik municipality (Mitova-Dzhonova 2006: 198, Tabl. I/g). A vessel with a depiction of an amphora comes from a metallurgical complex at Plana Planina, Samokov region (Mitova-Dzhonova 2006: 196, Tabl. I/v), and portrait images are known from the village of Popovyane, Samokovo and *Pautalia* (Grozdanov 2010: 133).

Among the fragments subjected to archaeoletric study, there is one of Form 10, a fragment of a screw-necked jug (Anderson-Stojanović 1992: 71, Pl. 54), grey-black, with a high metallic shine.

We can summarize the characteristic features of the pottery discussed as follows:

1. Shapes - bowls and plates of various sizes, shallow and deep, some with scalloped rims, cups, pitchers, and jugs. No doubt some of the forms have metal prototypes and/or are intended to resemble metal vessels.

2. Firing conditions – reduction and oxidizing, resulting in black, grey, and red surface colour in different shades.

3. Clay – generally fine, with a minimum amount of mica, but sandy variations also occur.

4. Manufacturing techniques – on a potter's wheel.

5. Coating – slip of varying quality, glossy, matte, sometimes applied to visible parts of the vessel. An undoubted imitation of metal vessels, especially the metal-like ones.

6. Decoration techniques – incised, stamped, rouletting; embossed/plastic, from a mould; in the case of smooth vessels – grooves on the rims; scalloped mouth margins of the plates; flutes on jug necks and handles. Decorative motifs – geometric (circles, concentric circles, lozenges, squares), floral (palmettes, rosettes), figural (animal and human). Figural motifs are executed in relief, with a mould or concave stamp.

7. Distribution – the eastern part of prefecture *Ilyiricum*, which coincides more or less with the central and partly western Balkan region.

8. Date – the generally accepted date is 4th to 6th century AD but there may be variations in different locations. So far it seems that this pottery was presented in *Serdica* in the 4th and 5th centuries AD.

Interdisciplinary research

Preliminary interdisciplinary studies on a limited number of fragments (a total of 33 specimens, predominantly grey/black in colour) have yielded promising results, although they are at



Fig. 4. Distribution area of the so-called Grey Macedonian terra sigillata (maps-for-free.com with additions by I. Borisova-Katsarova).

an early stage. The elemental composition of the samples was measured qualitatively and quantitatively by a portable X-ray fluorescence spectrometry instrument (Bruker S1 Titan). Raman spectroscopy was used to determine the phase composition of the samples using a Bruker Bravo portable equipment and excitation radiation at a wavelength of 785 nm. The spectra were analysed with the Opus and Crystal Sleuth software programs, and matches were found using an integrated database of Raman spectra, X-ray diffraction and chemistry data for minerals (RRUF™ Project database).

The composition of the clay was found to be similar in all the examined samples, both with black and red surfaces. Due to the relatively small number of the specimens analysed, complex statistical treatment of the data was not performed. Nevertheless, according to the Sr correlations, the grey/black and the red specimens were most probably produced using an identical clay type or the same clay deposit. The Fe/Mn and V/Ti correlations indicate an additional mineral/clay layer on the outer surface of the black specimens, containing higher Fe and Ti compounds compared to the ceramic cores (**fig. 5**). It seems that the polished surface with the distinctive metallic sheen of some grey/black vessels was achieved by coating with a mineral phase having natural graphite in its composition (up to 70% coincidence with the typical Raman spectra of natural graphite (R050503, RRUF) (**fig. 6**). Such a coating is absent in red vessels, where a mix of complex multielemental minerals can be recognized, including hematite, and substituted iron oxides. However, a significant match with the Raman spectrum of natural graphite is not observed within the red sherds (**fig. 7**). Graphite deposits in Bulgaria are mainly in its southern half, but there is also one in NW Bulgaria, in the Vratsa region. Such deposits have also been established in the Rila mountain, in the valley of the Struma River – the districts of Sandanski, Dupnitsa, Radomir and Kyustendil (Leshtakov 2004: 485, map 1).

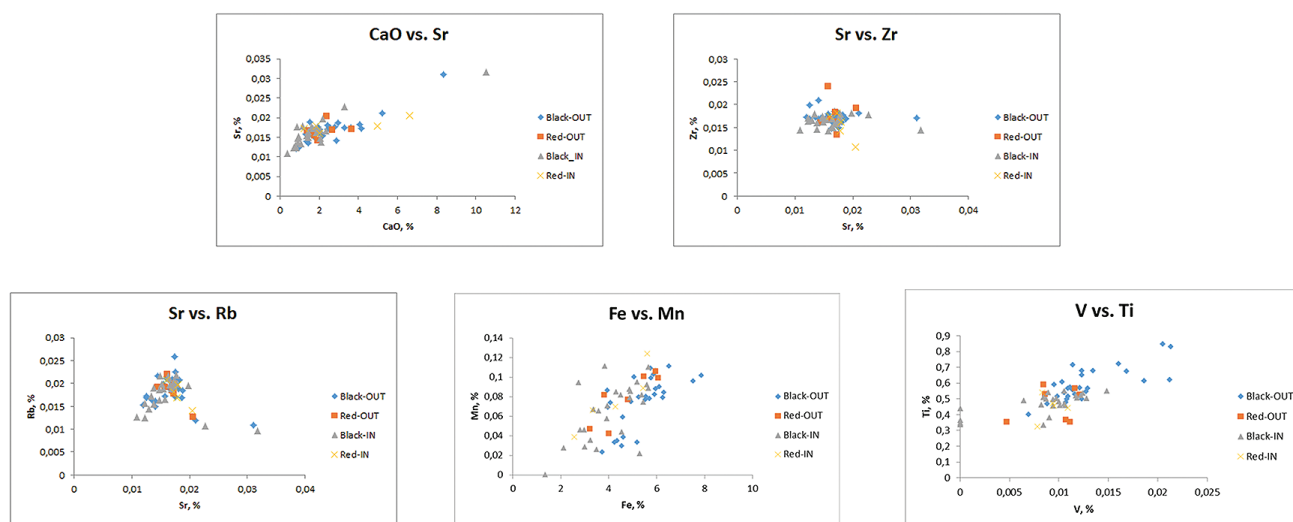


Fig. 5. Biplots of the correlations between some of the elemental concentrations obtained for the analyzed pottery sherds (D. Lesigyski).

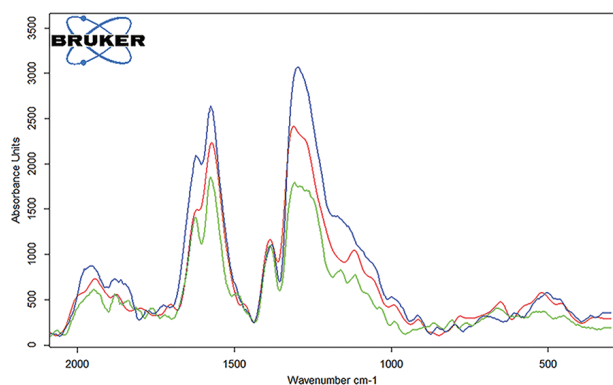


Fig. 6. Recorded Raman spectra of the additional surface layer of the black specimens CE107SOF (green), CE110SOF (blue), and CE118SOF (red) (D. Lesigyski).

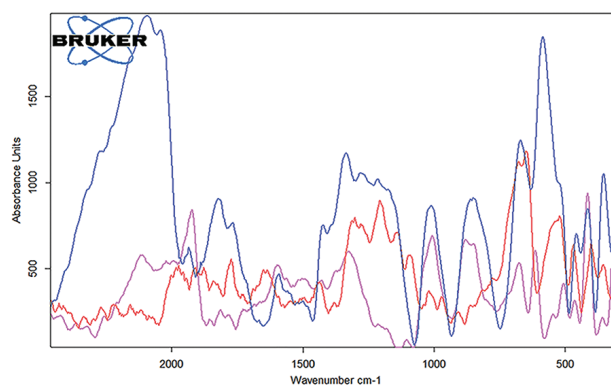


Fig. 7. Obtained Raman spectra of the surface layer of the red specimens CE106SOF (red), CE114SOF (blue), and CE129SOF (purple) (D. Lesigyski).

In any case, it is important to broaden the investigation using a significant number of grey/black and red samples, decorated and undecorated and from different locations to get a more definite conclusion regarding the technology of manufacturing and their origin. Where possible, additional interdisciplinary methods will be applied.

Discussion

The discussion can go in several directions – origin and distribution, producers and consumers/users of stamped pottery, period of existence etc.

Some authors connect the appearance of this pottery with the Iron Age traditions of the local population revived during Late Antiquity (Anderson-Stojanovic 1992: 61; Bulatovic 2015: 211). Others associate its appearance with a new population (Vladimirova-Paunova 2004: 218-219; Mitova-Dzhonova 2006: 199-200; Onchevska-Todorovska 2010: 64-65). Some of them associate it with the Goths,

who penetrated the Balkan Peninsula since the middle of the 3rd century and had a tangible presence in Late Antiquity (Onchevska-Todorovska 2010: 64-65; Onchevska-Todorovska 2016: 388), others with a population that came from the central or western provinces of the Roman Empire (Vladimirova-Paunova 2004: 218) or from the Eastern Mediterranean (Mitova-Dzhonova 2006: 199). The analyses are based mainly on the technological features and decoration of the pottery in question, tracing influences from different eras, regions, and ceramic traditions, but it seems to me that the mechanisms of transfer of these influences are not yet fully understood.

As noted, this pottery is found in many parts of the Balkan peninsula (in the Roman provinces of Macedonia, Thracia, Dacia Ripensis, Dacia Mediterranea, Dardania) which except for Thrace, belong to the prefecture of Illyricum of the Late Roman Empire. It was found at many sites in Western and Southwestern Bulgaria, mainly along the valley of the Struma River (Staikova 1989: 148), as well as in Serbia, Greece, and the Republic of North Macedonia, mainly along

the rivers Struma and Mesta (Anderson-Stojanovic 1992: 65; Mitova-Dzhonova 2006: 199; Onchevska-Todorovska 2010: 63-65). In the north, stamped pottery is found in present-day North-western Bulgaria (Luka 2011: 363) and by the Danube River is attested at Castra Martis (Kabakchieva 2005: 91-92), Ratiaria (Kuzmanov and Grudev 2013) and others.

Coincidentally or not, most of the stamped pottery is found in metallogenic zones in the prefecture of Illyricum that became particularly important in Late Antiquity (fig. 4). In the period of the existence of stamped ware, four imperial weapon factories operated in this area. Despite the traditions of mining and metallurgy in these areas (Velkov 1972), the scale of Late Antique production probably necessitated the recruitment of additional contingents of trained miners and metallurgists. Insofar as such ceramics are found in necropolises that are unambiguously associated with a population of specific occupation (mining, metallurgy) and/or ethnicity different from the local one (Mitova-Dzhonova 2006: 199; Vladimirova-Paunova 2004: 218-219), we can confirm that stamped pottery met the preferences of foreigners in these lands. Where these foreigners come from, however, is a question that has yet to be answered. We can reach answers after a complex analysis of the processes that took place in the Roman Empire during Late Antiquity, the contacts, and interactions between people, reflected in the archaeological and historical record. Unfortunately, the level of publication of archaeological materials in Bulgaria is far from satisfactory. The incomplete publication and uneven study of this pottery have led to a number of misunderstandings in its identification and interpretation (Kabakchieva 2005: 92).

Indeed, individual examples of pottery with stamped decoration are found outside the core of the outlined area, but in Bulgaria, they are still poorly published and studied. Whether they belong to the pottery considered here is not yet entirely clear. Their analysis is forthcoming.

On the territory of Bulgaria, production has been proven so far at *Pautalia* (present-day Kyustendil) (Staikova 1989: 148-149), but it is also assumed for *Serdica*, based on fragments with stamped decoration of coarse vessels made of local clay (fig. 2. 10).

Despite the remarkable similarities with Gallic pottery, the direct link with the Balkan pottery is not entirely clear. Clarifying the chronology is of major importance. For the Bulgarian lands, contexts with stamped pottery are dated from the 2nd to the 5th c. AD, even the 6th c. AD, with the earliest and latest dates often being problematic. It is noted that some of the stamped pottery originates from contexts that are not well stratified (Onchevska-Todorovska 2010: 63). It is certainly present in the period of Late Antiquity, in the 4th/5th c. AD.

Since its introduction, the term grey Macedonian terra sigillata (Hayes 1972: 405-407), based on examples known at the time, does not quite accurately reflect the character of this pottery, as the presence of red vessels with the same characteristics as the grey ones has been reported. Alternative names are used in Bulgarian literature - "the so-called "grey Macedonian sigillata" (Staikova 1989), grey pottery with plastic decoration (Mitova-Dzhonova 2006), grey slip ceramics (Kabakchieva 2005: 91-92), grey terra sigillata (Grozdanov 2010: 133-136), grey stamped ware. The term

"sigillée paléochrétienne" (Rigoir 1968) is also not adopted in the Bulgarian literature, since Christian symbolism in the decoration is too rare in the examples from Bulgaria (Grozdanov 2010). This is probably related to the fact that its appearance on our lands is in a period of still incipient Christianization of its users. All too rarely the vessels with a red surface are commented on in connection with the grey ones.

The publication and analysis of available materials from Bulgaria, which remain unknown to researchers, is essential. A comprehensive approach and interdisciplinary research would contribute to verifying the opportunities for local production. This will enhance our understanding of the processes and populations of the Balkans in Late Antiquity and may lead to the refinement of the description of the ceramic complex in question.

Conclusion

The pottery discussed here stands out against the usual and traditional for the Eastern Roman Empire ceramic complex. With its complex and sophisticated forms and in some cases rich decoration, it finds a relatively wide distribution both in cities and in suburban settlements, but it is by no means mass production. Some of the necropolises which yielded such pottery undoubtedly belong to a population engaged in mining and metallurgy. The funeral rite was predominantly cremation, which was not characteristic of these lands in Late Antiquity. Some of the pottery discussed here may represent locally produced interpretation of patterns that experienced their initial development in the Central and Western provinces of the Roman Empire and responded to the tastes of settlers in our lands. For the region of South-western Bulgaria, it has already been assumed that professional miners from the province of Noricum moved here in the 2nd and 3rd c. AD (Vladimirova-Paunova 2004: 218). The connection between stamped pottery and a population engaged in mining and metallurgy is also confirmed at sites such as the metallurgical complex in Plana Mountain, Samokov district (Mitova-Dzhonova 2006) and Crveno Pole in the Republic of North Macedonia (Sekulov 2017). An interesting detail is that in the area of distribution of the stamped ceramics are also found rectangular and circular vessels (sometimes called *kernoi*), which some authors perceive as cult vessels (Bulatovich 2015: 45, fig. 25), but others associate with the toolkit of metallurgists and gold panning (Orachev 2018: 75-76).

It is possible that the first generation of settlers brought the idea and technology of stamped pottery. Soon after, local production began, in a relatively restricted territory covering the Central Balkan region. Differences in the quality and style of decoration are probably due to different local resources and the personal abilities of the potters. The localization of the workshops and the establishment of the specifics of their production are subject of future research, as well as the establishment of the distribution patterns of this kind of pottery. These hypotheses, however, need further research and justification.

The commented pottery from *Serdica* completely fits into the outlined picture, as in recent years large-scale

metallurgical and metalworking activity within the city in the 4th century has been proven (Cholakova 2020).

After the 5th century AD, stamped pottery seems very rare in the archaeological record in modern-day Bulgaria. The reasons for this are yet to be discovered.

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Iliana Borisova-Katsarova
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
Department of Archaeology
ikacarova@uni-sofia.bg

Catalogue

1. Fragment of a shallow plate with a horizontal rim (**fig. 2, 1**). Fine fabric with low mica content; grey cross-section with lighter band in the middle. Reduction firing. Grey-black glossy slip. Decoration: located on the protruding rim. Incised parallel bands framing a stamped ornament of ellipses separated by pairs of incised pillars. Rim diameter (D. rim) ca. 26 cm. Findspot: The Western gate of Serdica.
2. Fragment of a plate/bowl with a horizontal rim (**fig. 2, 2**). Fine fabric with low mica content; red/orange cross-section with lighter band in the middle. Oxidation firing. Red glossy slip. Decoration: stamped almond-shaped ornament limited below by two incised parallel bands. D. rim 22/24 cm. Findspot: 15 Veslets Str.
3. Fragment of a plate/bowl with a horizontal rim (**fig. 2, 3**). Fine sandy fabric with low mica content. Reduction firing. Grey-black glossy slip. Decoration: stamped concentric circles and vertical and horizontal incisions. D. rim ca. 20 cm; Findspot: The Western gate of Serdica.
4. Fragment of a hemispherical bowl with horizontal scalloped rim (**fig. 2, 4**). Fine fabric with low mica content; grey cross-section with lighter band in the middle. Reduction firing. Black glossy slip. Decoration: on the rim, parallel incised bands, straight and wavy. D. rim 14 cm. Findspot: The Western gate of Serdica.
5. Fragment of a hemispherical bowl with horizontal scalloped rim (**fig. 2, 5**). The shape and decoration are identical to No. 4, but it is fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. Fine orange fabric, even cross-section; red-orange dense slip, with a matt sheen. D. rim 14 cm. Findspot: The Western gate of Serdica.
6. Fragment of a hemispherical bowl with horizontal rim (**fig. 2, 6**). Fine fabric without visible inclusions. Reduction firing. Light grey even cross-section. Grey/black matt slip. Decoration: a combination of parallel incised grooves and oblique incisions along the rim. D. rim 14 cm. Findspot: The Western gate of Serdica.
7. Fragment of a bowl/cup (**fig. 2, 7**). Probably biconical, possible to have handles. Oxidation firing. Orange fine fabric, light brown/orange even cross-section; red-brown slip. Decoration: stamped circles and S-shaped motifs arranged vertically. Findspot: 15 Veslets Str.
8. Fragment of a bowl/cup, similar to N 7, including the decoration (**fig. 2, 8**). Oxidation firing. Orange fine fabric with low mica content, cross-section with the same colour, lighter band in the middle. Inside there is a fingerprint from pressing the stamp. Findspot: 12 Tsvetan Minkov Str.
9. Fragment of a bowl/cup, similar to NN 7 and 8, but fired in a reduction atmosphere, with a metallic shine (**fig. 2, 9**). Indication of handle. Decoration: wavy incised band, concentric circles below. D. rim 17 cm. Findspot: 15 Veslets Str.
10. Fragment of a pot/pitcher (?) (**2, 10**). Brown sandy clay, without additional coating on the surface. Oxidation firing. Decoration: the preserved decoration is stamped on the upper half of the fragment. It consists of vertical pillars followed by a continuous horizontal stripe printed in the same technique and a band with a leaf motif underneath. Findspot: 15 Veslets Str.
11. Fragment of a biconical bowl/cup (**fig. 3, 1**). Outward curved rim. Reduction firing. Very fine fabric with low mica content. Grey even cross-section. Grey black slip with metallic shine. Decoration: concentric stamped circles and semicircles in horizontal rows. D. rim 7 cm. Findspot: 15 Veslets Str.
12. Fragment of a bowl/cup similar to the above (**fig. 3, 2**). Outward curved rim. Reduction firing. Very fine fabric with low mica content. Grey black slip with metallic shine. Decoration: concentric stamped circles and semicircles in horizontal row. Inside there are convex deformations caused by the application of the decoration; traces of a tool used during the throwing. D. rim 12 cm. Findspot: The Western gate of Serdica.
13. Fragment of the middle part of a biconical bowl/cup (**fig. 3, 3**). The presence of handles may be possible. Fine fabric with low mica content. Grey even cross-section. Reduction firing. Significantly thinner than other fragments. No traces of additional coating on the surface. Decoration: set in a horizontal band defined by convex horizontal bands, the lower one also marking the transition to the lower part of the vessel. Two motifs of vertically arranged concentric circles with elements of concentric quadrilaterals between them are preserved. From the decoration of the lower part of the vessel is preserved a band of concave elliptical elements. On the inner side of the fragment there are clearly visible traces left when the stamps were pressed on the surface. Findspot: The Western gate of Serdica.
14. Three fragments of a bowl (?) (**fig. 3, 4**). Fine fabric with low mica content. Broad lighter grey band in the cross-section. Reduction firing. Grey slip with metallic sheen. Decoration: the preserved decoration is arranged in a broad horizontal field, bounded above and below by relatively broad concave bands. It consists of stamped motifs and an embossed animal image set in a rectangular frame. The stamped motifs are concentric circles with a cross-shaped element in the centre and vertical short incisions on the outer part. To the circles diagonally descend elongated strips with horizontal incisions. The animal print is executed by pressing a negative print/matrix against the already formed vessel, so that the lower edge of the rectangular field of the matrix slightly breaks the horizontal line bounding it from below (actually, there is no indication as to which is the upper and which the lower part of the fragment, and therefore the terms "upper" and "lower" are somewhat provisional). Beneath the concave horizontal grooves, a small strip of oblique shallowly incised lines is preserved. On the inside there are traces left by pressing the stamps. Findspot: The Western gate of Serdica.
15. Fragment of a bowl (**fig. 3, 5**). Fine fabric with low mica content and isolated quartz grains. A denser grey stripe in the cross-section. Reduction firing. Grey slip with metallic sheen. The coating is generally thin and underneath there are visible unevenness on the surface of the vessel. Decoration: preserved are a stamped circle shaped as a floral motif with petals and small dots between them, a small fragment of a leaf-like motif and oblong stripes with diagonal incisions (a small part of one horizontal and one vertical band). D. rim 16 cm. Findspot: The Western gate of Serdica.

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