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OFF THE GRID: NON-IMPORTED WARES IN LATE ROMAN PHILIPPI

This study focuses on Late Roman pottery found in Philippi, Greece, aiming to shed light on local productions, often neglected in favor of imported wares. Despite Philippi's stature as a key urban center, research on its pottery has been sparse. The paper examines the pottery from a composite building in Philippi, revealing a distinct local ware characterized by consistent fabric and numerous vessel types, with several subtypes. The pottery, likely produced in Philippi, or the vicinity, reflects the city's unique needs and preferences. Analysis suggests that the ware flourished in the 5th and 6th centuries before declining in the 7th century. The findings emphasize the necessity of investigating local productions to attain a comprehensive understanding of regional dynamics and the intricacies of Late Roman market and economy.

Philippi – local ware – cooking pots – Late antique economy – pottery typology

Introduction

Despite the rising interest on the study of Late Roman pottery during the last few decades, it seems that most of the research taking place is focusing on major production centers and pottery vessels that circulate all around the Mediterranean and even beyond its shores. The lack of publications on local wares and the shortness in studies concerning Roman and Late Roman pottery that does not belong to major wares or commercial containers is striking. This is especially true when it comes to the late antique period in northern Greece. The act of the meeting on Late Antique pottery from Greece (Papanikola-Bakirtzi and Kousoulakou 2010), more than a decade ago seemed promising. But this initiative was without continuity. Furthermore, only a small part of the pottery included in this publication came from local productions and has rarely been presented with its context. One would expect that at least Thessaloniki, one of the most important urban centers in this period, would have been properly studied, but even in this case the data is disappointing. If one would gather up every published sherd from Late Antique contexts in northern Greece, would probably believe that pottery is mainly an imported commodity. In fact, the pottery that cannot be attributed to one of the known wares is often neglected. This is true even when pottery workshops are excavated (Yangaki et al. 2008; Poulou-Papadimitriou 2018: 34). Additionally, there is a common concept that local workshops are only capable of low-quality pottery, imitating and complementing imported ware. This paper aspires to slightly contribute to the knowledge on the local production traits in northern Greece, focusing on the pottery found in a composite building in Philippi that cannot be identified as imported.

The city of Philippi (**fig. 1**), placed east of Thessaloniki, next to the modern city of Kavala, in the shadow of Pangeon

mountain, was founded in the 4th century BC originally known as Dato or Krinides (Collart 1937: 133-137; Zannis 2014: 523-539). A few years later was taken over by Phillip II' who renamed the city after himself. After the Battle of Philippi, in which Antony and Octavian defeated Caesar's assassins, the city became a Roman Colony (Collart 1937: 223-235; Lazaridis 1973: 11, 30; Koukouli-Chrysanthaki 1998) and was soon populated by Italian settlers (Collart 1937: 228), gaining a huge economic boost. Gradually Philippi raised in a major urban center, with numerous impressive public buildings being erected, until the 6th century AD (Lemerle 1945; Zachariadis 2020: 12-13). The early 7th century marks a significant decline, causing some scholars to argue that the city was totally abandoned at the time, assumably due to Slavic invasions (Lemerle 1945: 118; Konstantakopoulou 1984: 200-202). Recent research disproves this hypothesis (Bakirtzis 1989: 700-702; Doukata 1990: 389; Zachariadis

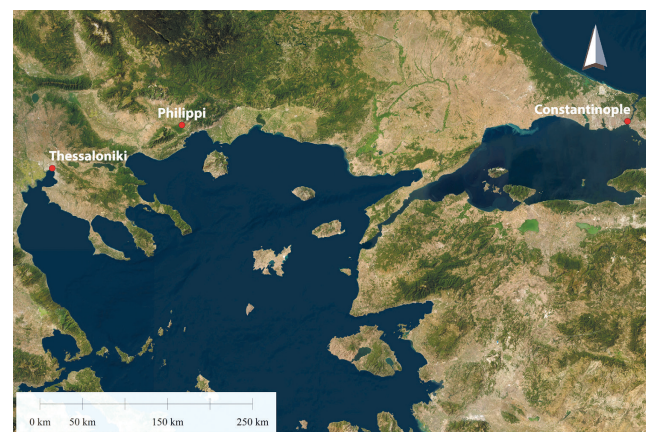


Fig. 1. Map of the North Aegean and the Sea of Marmara.

2014: 707-708; Poulou-Papadimitriou and Tantzis 2018: 167-168; Curta 2012; Doukata-Demertzi 2022: 370-372; Poulou 2022; Zachariadis 2022: 470-475), although a series of finds point towards a major catastrophic event (Doukata 1990: 388-389; Pelekanidou and Mentzos 1990: 606; Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou 1995: 173; Pennas 1995: 222; Koukouli-Chrysanthaki and Karadedos 1999: 80-81; Provost and Foschia 2002: 114-115; Provost 2004: 786-788), identified as a strong earthquake during the 2nd quarter of the 7th century (Gounaris 1984: 49; 1988: 400-401; Bakirtzis 1989: 696-698; Gounaris and Velenis 1992: 257, 269-270; Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou 1995: 173; 1996: 740; 1998: 412; Pennas 1995: 222; Sève 2000: 199-202; Velenis 2002: 131; Provost 2004: 795). After the mid-7th century drastic changes occurred reforming the city and its society, lasting for at least a couple of centuries (Zachariadis 2022: 470-474).

Local Common wares in Late Roman Philippi

The pottery for this communication comes from a luxurious building, east of the forum, that was excavated from 1992 to 2002 by the late professor Gounaris and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. It's known for its impressive mosaic floors that include scenes of chariot racing (Gounaris 2001; Gounari 2008). It was founded in the 3rd century AD and destroyed by a fire in late 4th (Gounaris 2001: 351; Gounaris 2003: 359; Gounari 2008: 87), or probably in the early 5th century (Zachariadis 2020: 460). Soon after this, it was repurposed as a glass factory and other industrial activities (Gounaris 2001: 323; Zachariadis 2014: 705, 708). Its last phase can be dated sometime in the late 6th century, when it was taken over by poorly built private houses, including some areas modified for keeping livestock (Gounaris 2001: 351; 2003: 359-361). After the late 7th century, the area was probably left uninhabited (Zachariadis 2020: 460).

Aside from the imported products, that add up to 40% of the pottery (Zachariadis 2020: 504), a homogeneous ware was identified, that has been neglected for long (Zachariadis 2020: 366-432)¹. Apart from sporadic reports on some of its products (Malamidou 2005; Zachariadis 2010, 2014: 706), its local origin is only implied, when the pottery from an adjacent building was studied (Trivizadaki 2005: 27, 252).

The fabric of the ware (**fig. 2**), and especially its composition, is very consistent throughout time and various shapes. Its color varies from yellowish red to brown, it is hard, breaking unevenly, and can sometimes bears grayish or dark colored layers, especially in thicker sherds. It contains many angular and subangular silicate inclusions, mostly smaller than 2mm in diameter, as well as flakes of golden mica. Constantly occurring, though in small quantity, one can notice small rounded, brown clay pellets. Three distinct fabrics can be discerned based on quantity and distribution of the inclusions. Only one of them, containing more abundant and poorly sorted silicate inclusions can be assigned to a specific shape and

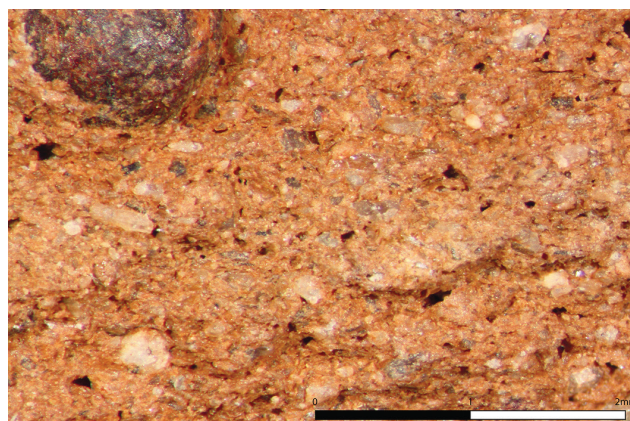


Fig. 2. Microscopic view of the Philippi CLW.

has some dating significance, used for 6th century cooking pots (Zachariadis 2020: 367-369).

The consistent composition of the clay and the sorting of its inclusions suggest that it comes from a single source and there was no mixture from different deposits. The occurrence of holes in the fabric deriving from the presence of organic material is indicative that the cleaning process was not very thorough, and no specialized techniques were employed.

The pottery under consideration is wheel made. In most cases, vessels are created in a single throw, with no added parts, except for the handles. Only in larger shapes, such as amphoras and some jugs, the neck is thrown separately and then attached to the body. The external surface usually remains plain, with shallow groove marks or bands made by some kind of spatula, while the bottom of the vessels often retains the cut marks, suggesting that little or no trimming occurred after it was removed from the wheel. The ceramics are fired in oxidizing atmosphere, in rather high temperature. Nevertheless, there are some gray colored examples, probably due to misfiring (Zachariadis 2020: 370-371).

Almost every shape known in Late Antiquity is represented in the ware, both open and closed ones, including some lamps copying imported examples. However, they are unevenly distributed (**fig. 3**). Only a small percentage of the vessels studied can be related to table ware, while the ones connected to food preparation prevail (Zachariadis 2020: 367, 452).

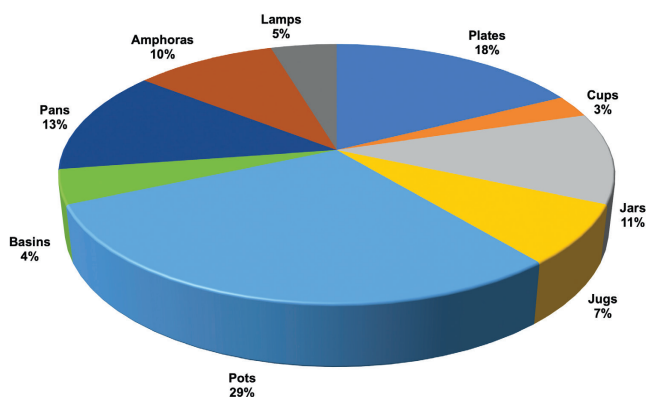


Fig. 3. Distribution of shapes amongst the CLW studied.

¹ The ware under consideration was studied for my PhD thesis (Zachariadis 2020). It is being described as CLW (common local ware) and divided in 41 types with several subtypes.

Cups bear similarities to imported examples (**fig. 4**). Two different types can be identified. One of them (CLW1) resembles the general form of several types of cups common in the eastern mediterranean area during the Roman and Late Roman period such as the Marabini LXVIII cups (Marabini Moevs 1973: 237-238, pl. 46, 85, nos. 431-433), the cups known as *urnetta a collarino* (Lamboglia 1962: 285; Hayes 2008:101-104) or the Italian mugs (Anderson-Stojanović 1992: 74) and the second (CLW2) inspired by Macedonian Gray Ware vessels (Anderson-Stojanović 1992: 70, pl. 53, nos. 463-467).

Most of the jugs found, belong to the same local ware. Even though the standardization of this shape is rather limited, two distinct groups can be identified (**fig. 5**). The first one includes larger, wide mouthed vessels (CLW3), while the second consists of jars with narrow neck and outward rim (CLW4 – 5). No original shapes can be identified and most of the examples studied seem to follow a general trend, common in the entire Greek mainland. There are many similarities to the Macedonian Gray ware (Anderson-Stojanović 1992: 140-141, pl. 144-145, nos. 1242, 1248) as well as to a series of widemouthed jars bearing grooves on the neck, common in Athens (Robinson 1959: 79, pl. 17, no. L45), Crete (Vogt 2000: 70, fig. 20, no. 7) and Thessaloniki. Similar examples were found during the excavations for the construction of the subway in Thessaloniki. Additionally, there is a distinct series of small – medium sized jars (CLW6 – 7), closely related to the amphoras of the ware.

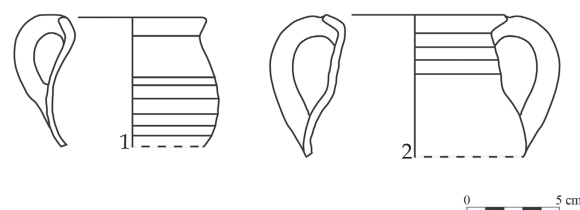


Fig. 4. Cups (CLW1 – 2).

Two types of amphoras are identified (**fig. 6**). The first one (CLW8) with conical neck and a large groove below the rim, while the other (CLW9) has a wider neck and outward thickened rim with rounded or squarish profile. They both have ovoid body and arched handles and share a circular, flat base (Pennas 1995: fig. 8-9). They are produced simultaneously, probably for different contents. A few examples are identified in the vicinity of the city (Malamidou 2005: 73, fig. 113, no. 1058) but they are not present in Late Antique contexts from nearby urban centers, such as Thessaloniki. It's probable that they are not commercial containers and are most likely used for the household or for some low intensity, local trade. None of the examples retains traces of resin in the interior, indicative of the fact that they are not purposed for long-term storing, enhancing their domestic or local character. A third type of amphora (CLW10), with triangular rim, that is only identified from partially preserved sherds is more

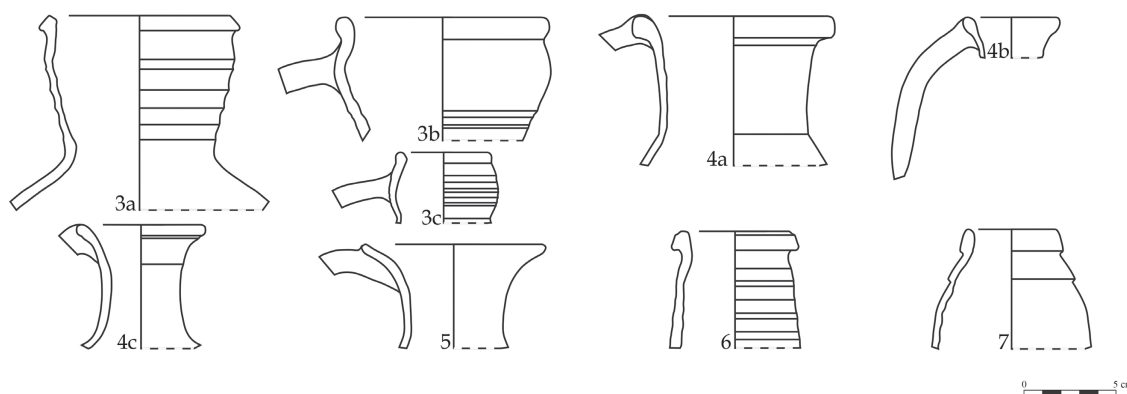


Fig. 5. Jugs (CLW3 – 7).

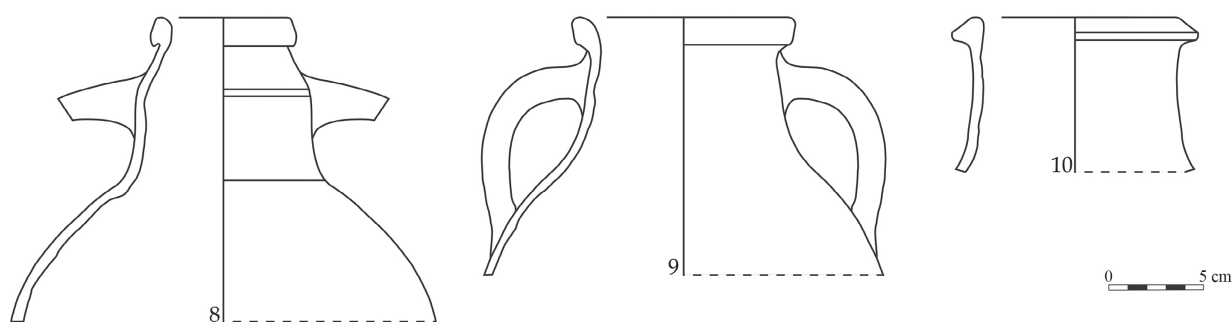


Fig. 6. Amphorae (CLW8 – 10).

probably used as a water bearing vessel, and maybe should be classified as a wide mouthed jar than an actual amphora.

Large basins with wide rim (**fig. 7**) of ovoid shape are rather common in Philippi (CLW11 – 16). They are large vessels, necessary for a multitude of uses in everyday life, related to personal hygiene (Robinson 1959: 19-20, pl. 4, no. F91; Pasqualini 2002), house cleaning (Gross 2014: 716-717), storing or preparing food, but there are no burn marks, indicative of their employment in cooking. Their shape is rather common, both in time and space (Robinson 1959: 31, pl. 6, no. G99, 42, pl. 7, no. G187, 66, pl. 13, no. K78-81; Hayes 1983: 132, fig. 13, nos. 173-176; Slane 1990: 122, fig. 30, no. 236; 1994: 142, fig. 10, no. 47; Gross 2014; Pasqualini 2002; Bonifay 2004: 260-263). Earlier types bear pinched decoration or grooves on the rim, making them one of the few decorated vessels of the ware.

Smaller pans (**fig. 8**) of hemispherical or angular shape are the most abundant open vessels in the repertoire of the local pottery of Philippi, representing more than 17% of the ware. Most of the examples belong in only two types. One of them is probably related to table ware, with hemispherical shape and inward rim (CLW17) while the second one is probably used for cooking, like a frying pan (CLW18). Its walls are oblique while it's almost certain that a lid was commonly employed. The form is very similar to Hayes's type 2 pans from Knossos (Hayes 1983: 107, 126, fig. 9, no. 103-109) and its parallels, dating in the 2nd and 3rd century, (Robinson 1959: 33, pl. 7, 72, no. G113 – G115, 67, pl. 14, 72, no. K89-91; Slane 1990: 79, fig. 16, no. 167; Sackett 1992: 233, pl. 174, no. D3.10, 245, pl. 186, no. R2.11, 248, pl. 188, nos. S1.11, 253, pl. 193, no. U.65), as well as its later versions (Anderson-Stojanović 1984: 140, pl. 144, no. 1243; Hayes 1992: 91-92, fig. 30, no. 2.1, 4.6; Sackett 1992: 252, pl. 193, no. U.67; Yangaki 2005: 179-180, fig. 46 a-b; Slane and Kyriazi 2014: 909, fig. 5; Zachariadis 2020: 358-359). This type seems to vanish in the late 6th century. Two more types are identified (CLW19 – 20), represented by only a few examples, closely connected to CLW18, both in form and dating. Although it has been suggested that the use of open cooking vessels could be correlated with the preference of goat, sheep and fish consumption, typical for the Mediterranean (Arthur 2007; Vionis, Poblome and Waelkens 2009: 161-162), there is not enough evidence to support this hypothesis, at least for the case of Philippi.

Plates and bowls are the least represented shapes in the local ware (**fig. 9**), with only two distinct types, resembling the Macedonian gray ware products (CLW21 – 22), especially forms 1 and 2 proposed by Anderson-Stojanović (1992: 66-69). The minimal quantity of the shape can be explained by the abundant imports, especially until the 6th century AD, as well as the fact that wooden plates could answer the same needs (Sanders 2018).

Closed vessels, associated with cooking, make up more than 60% of the vessels studied (Zachariadis 2020: 452, graf. 6). Two major shapes can be identified. One of them refers to medium sized or large widemouthed jars (**fig. 10**), with vertical or protruding rim and, most commonly, horizontal handles (CLW23 – 25). Similar vessels are common in many contexts (Robinson 1959: 51, 55, pl. 10, nos. J4, J39-40, 88, pl. 18, nos. M39-40, 91, pl. 21, no. M75; Anderson-Stojano-

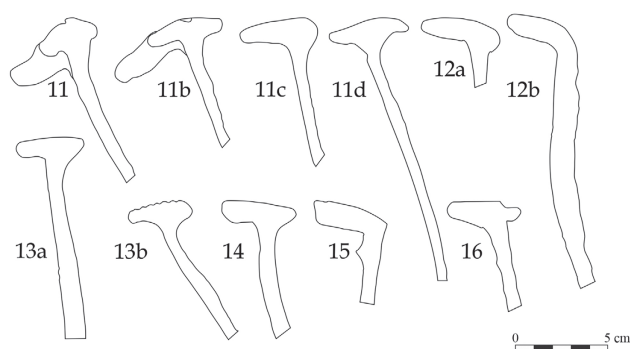


Fig. 7. Basins (CLW11 – 16).

vić 1992: 141, pl. 146, nos. 1261-1263; Sanders 1999: 469, fig. 11, nos. 15-16; Albertocchi and Perna 2001: 525-527, pl. 128-130, nos. BI3.2/1, BIV 2.1/1, BXI 2.4/1; Didjoumi 2010: 808, fig. 8, nos. Π4405, Π4426, 816, fig. 9, no. 42; Belvedere and Burgio 2014: 1027, fig. 7.10), although none of them is identical to the distinct type found in Philippi. The shape of these vessels, with a highlighted vertical axis and probably a flat base (none of them preserves a complete profile), suggest that they are being used as storage containers. Nevertheless, burn marks in the lower part, and especially in the bottom part of some handles, indicate their use as cooking vessels, probably in an oven, covered by a lid, similarly to traditional Greek pottery vessels used in Sifnos and other places until today.

The most common shape of the ware is the cooking pot (**fig. 11**). Several types are identified (CLW26 – 37). Their form varies from small round bodied or biconical pots to widemouthed casseroles. After the end of the Aegean ribbed cooking ware by the end of the 3rd century, originally classified by Hayes (1983: 105-106, fig. 5-6, nos. 56-71, 79-91; 1991: 80; 1997: 79-80), that are commonly found in Philippi (Zachariadis 2020: 331-333), only few imports can be identified, hence the needs of the city are answered by the local ware. The general form of cooking pots in every period follows specific standards, common in almost the entire Mediterranean. Besides, these are dictated by common ways in food preparation. Nevertheless, some distinct types can be identified in the local production and an evolutionary line can be traced amongst some of them. Additionally, one can notice a gradual diminution of size with time.

Finally, a series of lids (CLW38 – 41), made in local fabric, can be related with cooking vessels, either pots or jugs, or even pans (**fig. 12**). The shape of the various types does not differ from what is common throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, except for one (CLW42), possibly late type, with larger examples, bearing a large hole as a handle.

Although the term local has been used, the actual workshops producing this ware cannot be pinpointed, at least for the time being, while no analytical techniques have been employed to enhance this assumption. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence that the origin of the ware should be placed in the vicinity of the city, or even in the urban context itself. Pottery kilns have been excavated in the scene of the theater, dated in the second half of the 5th century

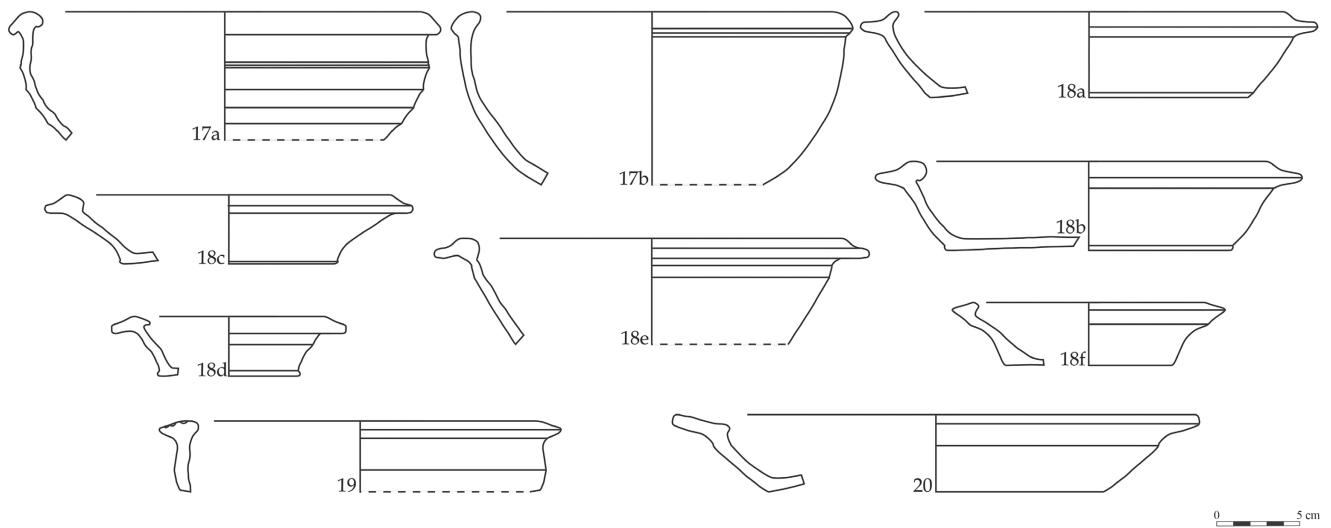


Fig. 8. Pans (CLW17 – 20).

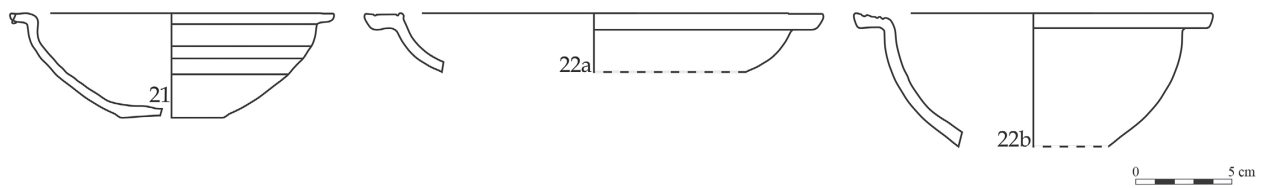


Fig. 9. Plates and bowls (CLW21 – 22).

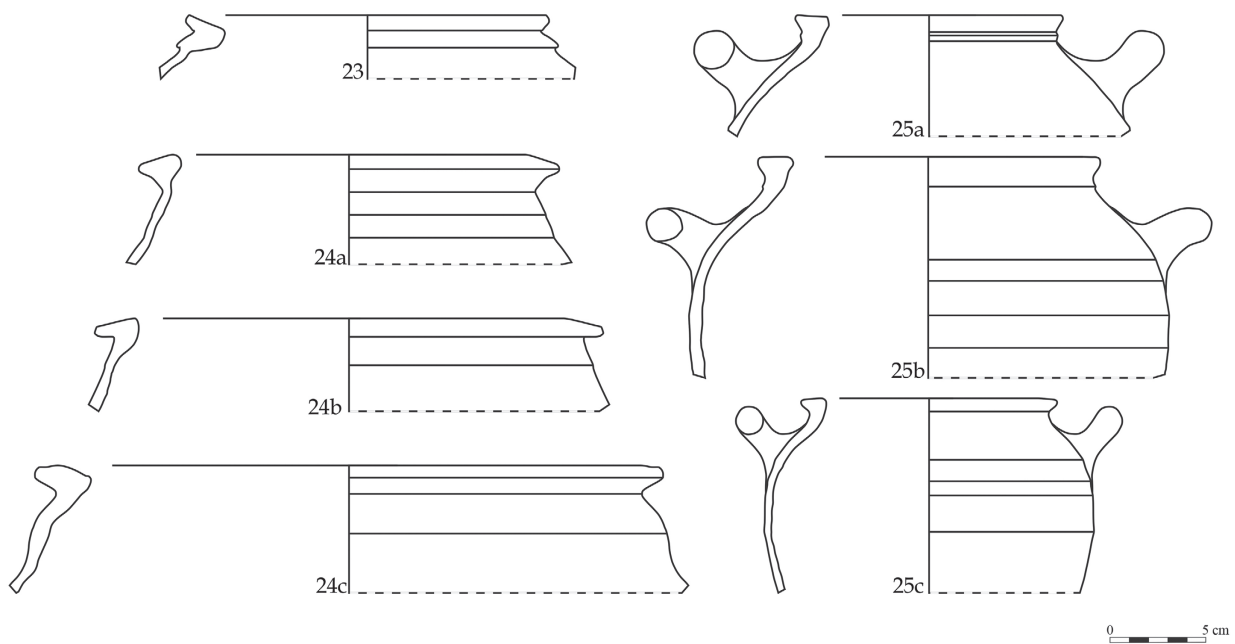


Fig. 10. Jars (CLW23 – 25).

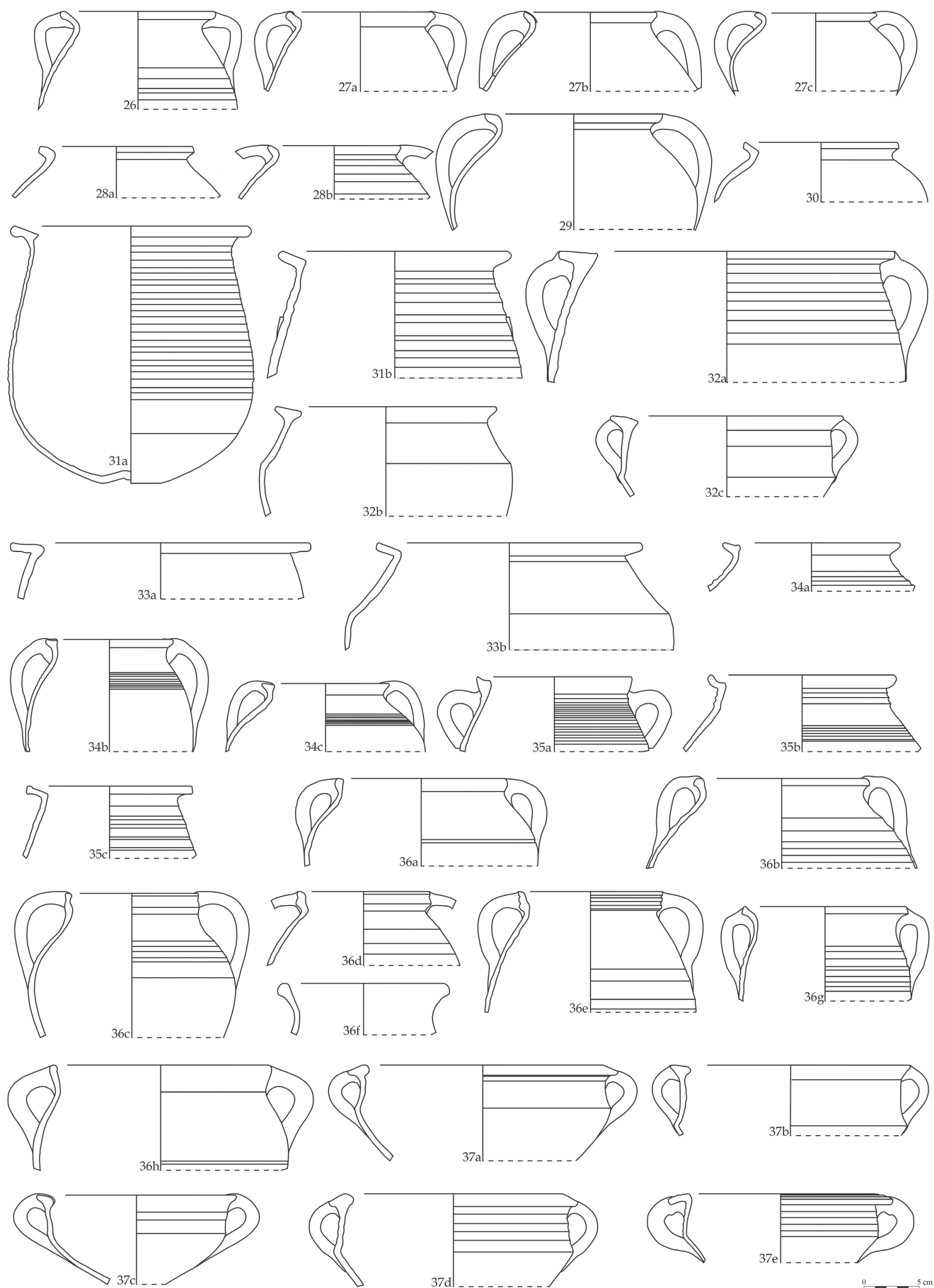


Fig. 11. Cooking pots and casseroles (CLW26 – 37).

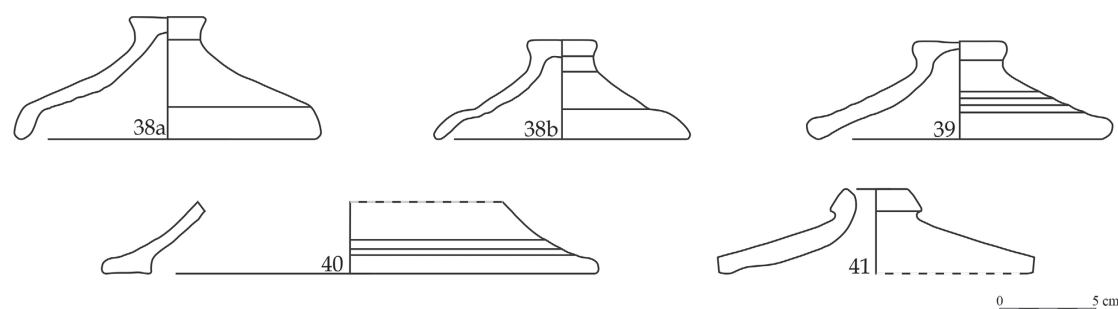


Fig. 12. Lids (CLW38 – 41).

(Koukouli-Chrysanthaki and Karadedos 1999: 80) while a large rectangular one, still unpublished, was found along its western wall. Another pottery kiln was found, next to the extra-muros basilica (Bakirtzis 1980) and one westward of the city, probably dated in the Roman period (Nikolaïdou-Patera and Megidis 2004: 36). Unfortunately, in none of these cases has the pottery been published, along with the excavation reports. Though it would be rational to attribute the ware under consideration to the aforementioned workshops, one cannot exclude the possibility that other nearby sites, such as Amphipolis or the coastal Neapolis, share the same ceramic production. A series of petrographic analysis could provide more information.

The shapes adopted suggest that the ware's production is orientated to the needs of the city of Philippi. The vessels are not intended for commercial use, since its products have not been identified in any significant quantities in nearby urban centers. Nevertheless, some examples and parallels from Thassos (Abadie-Reynal and Sodini 1992: 37-53, fig. 15-22), the temple of Hero Aylonites (Malamidou 2005: 73, fig. 113, nos. 1058-1059) and Abdera (Malamidou 2005: 71, fig. 110, no. 1773) are indicative of a local trade network, as it has already been suggested (Trivizadaki 2005: 271).

Final remarks

Even though the beginning or the end of this production cannot be defined for the time being, the distribution of local ware in the various lots, suggests that the ware is fully developed by the 4th century, reaches its peak in the 5th and early 6th century and declines during the 7th century, as a result of an overall recession in the city (**Tab. 1**). The proposed dates for the typology of the CLW of Philippi are based on the pottery studied from the Glass Factory insula (Zachariadis 2020). Further work with safely dated contexts could alter these dates and provide more precise chronology for the ware and each individual type.

The quantity of the pottery, the quality of the fabric, and the variety of the shapes in this specific ware suggest a well-organized and autonomous production, highly familiarized with the local raw material and the consumer's preferences, adopting the main trends of pottery in each period, affected mostly by major workshops of the Aegean and the southern Balkans.

Shape	Type	Suggested chronology
Cup	CLW1	4th century
	CLW2	5th / 5th - 6th century
Jug	CLW3	5th - 7th century
	CLW4	4th - 5th century
	CLW5	6th - 7th century
	CLW6	5th century
	CLW7	5th century
Amphora	CLW8	5th - first half of 6th century
	CLW9	4th - 5th century
	CLW10	5th century
Basin	CLW11	4th - 5th century
	CLW12	Second half of 5th - 6th century
	CLW13	5th century
	CLW14	5th century
	CLW15	5th century
	CLW16	Second half of 5th - 6th century
Pan	CLW17	Second half of 4th - early 6th century
	CLW18	Second half of 4th - early 6th century
	CLW19	5th century
	CLW20	5th century
Bowl	CLW21	Late 5th - 6th century
Dish / Bowl	CLW22	5th century
Jar	CLW23	Second half of 4th - 5th century
	CLW24	Late 4th - 5th century
	CLW25	5th / 6th century
Cooking pot	CLW26	4th / 4th - 5th century
	CLW27	Second half of 4th - 5th / 6th century
	CLW28	4th / 4th - 5th century
	CLW29	5th - 6th century
	CLW30	Late 5th - 6th century
	CLW31	4th - early 5th century
	CLW32	3rd / 4th - 5th century
	CLW33	5th century
	CLW34	5th - 7th century
	CLW35	6th - 7th century
	CLW36	Late 5th - 7th / 8th century
Casserole	CLW37	4th / 5th - late 6th century
Lid	CLW38	4th - 5th / 6th century
	CLW39	5th - 7th century
	CLW40	5th century
	CLW41	6th century

Tab. 1. Proposed dates for the Philippi CLW types.

Many scholars argue on the necessity to move away from barren typological studies, to try and see the bigger picture, to identify trade networks and define the roads that connect urban centers, ports and eventually different cultures and civilizations forming the unique identity of Late Antiquity. But it seems we are still missing important pieces of the puzzle. In order to sketch the grid that connects the dots of Late Antiquity, one first has to look off the grid and identify the components forming this singularity. The study of local

productions could provide us with better understanding of everyday life, economy and society in each region creating an even more refined chronological tool, adapted in the peculiarities of every single case.

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