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## ECHOES OF AN EAST-WEST NETWORK THROUGH THE STUDY OF POTTERY IMPORTS AND LOCAL PRODUCTIONS FROM *HADRIANOPOLIS* (ALBANIA). FROM EASTERN SIGILLATA TO PLAIN AND COOKING WARES

*The article provides an overview of pottery productions and imports in Hadrianopolis during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. After a brief introduction to the ceramic context of Hadrianopolis and the current status of research into the site's productive activity including its network, the primary focus will be on imports from the Eastern Mediterranean, specifically Eastern Sigillata B; the focus thereafter will be on what has been termed a regional "sigillata" that shows imitations of sigillata forms, particularly Eastern Sigillata. The study of the cooking wares has also highlighted a particular receptiveness towards Aegean productions: imported specimens from the kitchens of Hadrianopolis can be identified as Aegean Cooking Wares. The presence of these items in Hadrianopolis will be put in relation to local productions, such as plain wares and cooking wares, and regional imports, such as Illyrian cooking ware and a red slip production with a significant repertoire of imitations.*

Epirus – Eastern sigillata B – plain ware pottery – cooking ware pottery – Aegean cooking ware

### The ceramic context of Hadrianopolis. An introduction

As the undergoing study of the materials from the roman city of *Hadrianopolis* in Southern Epirus is approaching its conclusion, it is now possible to construct a more detailed overview of pottery imports and productions (regarding the previous studies on pottery from *Hadrianopolis*, see the contributions published in Perna and Çondi 2012, as well as some later articles: Perna and Capradossi 2018; Perna, Capponi and Cingolani 2014; Ciccarelli, Cingolani and Tubaldi 2018; Cingolani and Xavier de Silva 2020)<sup>1</sup>.

Between the 2nd and the 3rd centuries, *Hadrianopolis* appears to have been a centre of a commercial dynamism that includes the Chaonian centre in the wider Mediterranean networks, with established connections with the Aegean and Eastern markets. Excavation data, some of which is still unpublished, also provide evidence of artisanal activity (a conglomerate of melted and vitrified pots has been discovered on the site. Some of the most common shapes of plain ware have been recognised in the conglomerate) and hypotheses on possible local productions have been recently made (see Cingolani and Xavier de Silva 2020. Concluding remarks on the subject will be published by this author and Sofia Cingolani in the forthcoming volume *Hadrianopolis III*: Perna forthcoming).

In *Hadrianopolis*, this period shows significant imports of Eastern Sigillata B (ESB). The study of the ceramics in *Hadrianopolis* and the associations between imports and local productions depict a situation that has parallels both in the main centres of the Southern Illyrian-Epirote region and in Apulia (see Shehi 2015 and De Mitri 2013).

In this context, it is worth mentioning the presence of a conspicuous group of pottery characterised by a red-brownish coating. This group, identified at the start of the archaeological mission at *Hadrianopolis*, has recently been the object of a dedicated study conducted by Sofia Cingolani and this writer (see Ciccarelli, Cingolani and Tubaldi 2018 for the first overview of the subject and Cingolani and Xavier de Silva 2020 for a preliminary report on the last phases of the study of this group of materials). After further investigating identifiable shapes and clay fabrics, we came to a final categorization into three main production groups. Groups A and B (distinguished only because of their clay fabric that may correspond to two different production centres) have been identified as possible regional "sigillata" productions. The items belonging to this group are characterised by a good quality red-brownish slip and a repertoire of standardised shapes inspired by the main sigillata wares circulating in the Mediterranean at the time, with a significant prevalence of ESB imitations. Moreover, some forms show contamination of sigillata models with a local taste. This production was imported to *Hadrianopolis* through redistribution centres that are for now difficult to identify (*Hadrianopolis*' relations with centres along the north-south axis between Nikopolis and the ports on the coast were strengthened at this stage, leading to the multiplication of contacts and forms of supply. The morpho-typological analysis of the materials suggests comparisons with the coeval productions of Apollonia and Durres, while a fragment of oil-lamp with the FORTIS BYLLIS seal

<sup>1</sup> The authors thank Professor Roberto Perna for the opportunity to be part of the Archaeological Mission of the University of Macerata in the Drino Valley, where we had the chance to study the local productions and some imported classes of pottery from the site of *Hadrianopolis*. This article considers the finds unearthed during the archaeological excavations carried out between 2011 and 2016. During that period, the archaeological mission at *Hadrianopolis* was directed by Dimiter Çondi for the Albanian Institute of Tirana (IAT) and Roberto Perna for the University of Macerata. I also take this chance to thank the Directors for the opportunity to anticipate here some data of future publication.

highlights contacts with Byllis. For further considerations see: Cingolani in Cingolani and Xavier de Silva 2020; Perna forthcoming). The spread of this kind of “sigillata” production is a well-known phenomenon in the whole Aegean area (for the Corinthian production of sigillata imitations, see the contribution of Slane in this same volume) and on the two coasts of the Adriatic Sea during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD (this phenomenon in the Adriatic region follows the same pattern as the spread of *Illyrian Cooking Ware*. See: Ciccarelli Cingolani and Tubaldi 2018: 605-618; De Mitri 2013; Tubaldi 2012: 179. For an overview of the phenomenon in the Adriatic and Aegean regions and the related up-to-date bibliography, see Shehi 2015 as well as the considerations made by Cingolani in Cingolani and Xavier de Silva 2020. Moreover, for a comment on the regional fine wares found in Butrint, see Reynolds 2020: 233-235, while for the context of Apollonia see: Barrière 2022:87-89). The last group identified, called C, is composed of a more heterogeneous repertoire of shapes, and is characterised by a poor-quality red-brownish slip, sometimes preserved only on very small areas of the outer surface. The group also shows some form of inspiration from sigillata productions and is documented as belonging to the same centuries of groups A and B (this production will be mentioned again in the paragraph on plain wares).

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### The imports from the Eastern Mediterranean. The Eastern Sigillata

The excavations at *Hadrianopolis* have brought to light a significant amount of Eastern Sigillata. Among the 465 fragments studied, 438 are identifiable as Eastern Sigillata B, especially its B2 production, the later one (this is a widespread trend in the Mediterranean area since the more refined and ancient ESB production (B1) did not have such a significant diffusion as the later production, possibly because the Italian Sigillata was still very present on the Mediterranean market. For an overview of ESB, see Hayes 1985: 49-52; Hayes 2008; Malfitana 2005: 134-140; Shehi 2015: 235-247).

There is very little evidence of Eastern Sigillata A and the so-called Çandarlı in the layers of *Hadrianopolis*. As a matter of fact, it was possible to identify only four fragments as ESA and three as Çandarlı. They mainly belong to layers with a significant presence of residual materials, such as black glazed pottery, and Italian sigillata (the scarcity of ESA and Çandarlı productions is a common feature in all Epirus and Southern Illyria. Shehi 2015: 247).

Regarding the ESB found in *Hadrianopolis*, it is essential to note that most of the fragments are characterised by very poor conservation of the red slip, almost absent in some cases (fig. 2, 1), to the point that the classification was based on the observation of the clay fabric in section. Observation with a microscope of the clay fabrics of each item shows only a few differences, mainly identifiable in the shades of the colour of the clay. Therefore, it has not been possible to identify different groups of ESB imports in *Hadrianopolis* (all the fragments have a micaceous clay fabric characterised by a hazelnut to orange colour and a porous texture. The red-slip,

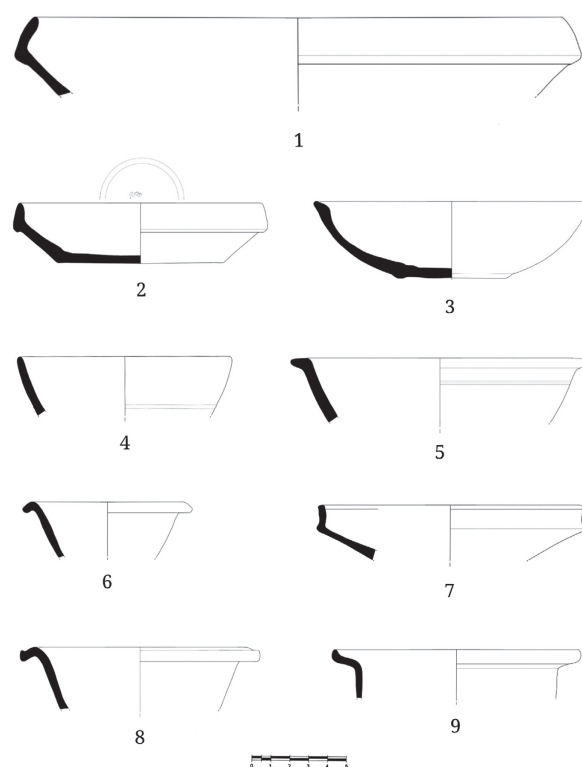


Fig. 1. ESB types found in *Hadrianopolis*.

where preserved, has a soapy texture and is characterised by a red-orange colour, which in most cases appears to be matt and can have tone variations from a brighter orange-red to dark, almost black, shades, sometimes visible on the same item).

The most documented shape of ESB in *Hadrianopolis* is the plate/bowl Hayes 60, especially in its more standardised form, characterised by an overhanging rim (which can show some variations in inclinations, presence of external and internal offsets and in the section shape, which can be more or less hooked) and concentric offsets on the inner bottom. All the fragments found in *Hadrianopolis* would appear to belong to the later, more standardised shape, which circulated in the Mediterranean from the 50-60 AD and reached its maximum diffusion during the late 2nd-3rd century AD (an earlier form, with a less protruding, almost triangular rim and a carinated profile, is reported to have circulated until the 80-90 AD. Hayes 2008: 38; For Abadie-Reynal, this type of rim can be dated to the Flavian-Trajan period, while two further types, one with a higher more pronounced rim and a second, grooved on the rim's projection, can be dated respectively to the 2nd century AD and to the second half of the 2nd century: Abadie-Reynal 2007: 90-99).

Among the items studied, the smaller bowls have a diameter of between 12 and 15 cm; they tend to be shallower and have a shorter rim (according to Hayes, the smaller and less refined bowls are the later examples of this type. Hayes 1985: 64). In this group, one item (fig. 1, 2) preserves part of a *palmetta* stamp, typical of this type (Hayes 1985: 64). Another group includes larger bowls, with diameters of ca. 20 cm, often characterised by a sunken rim (fig. 1, 1), also belonging to the later declination of the type Hayes 60. This

example finds parallels in two fragments from Phoinike, both classified by Shehi in the group of shapes belonging to the late 1st-2nd century AD (Shehi 2015: 64-65, pl. 9.109 and pl. 10.110. Shehi makes a distinction among the later forms of Hayes 60 based on the classification of the materials from Argos. For the latter, see: Abadie-Reynal 2007: 98-99).

All the other types that are recognisable in the finds from *Hadrianopolis* are significantly less documented than type Hayes 60 (for the chronological range of the following types, see, as the main reference, Hayes 1985). There are only two types with more than ten finds; we count eighteen fragments of the bowl Hayes 80 (fig. 1, 3), dated between 80 and 150 AD (the bowls found at *Hadrianopolis* do not always show the typical external grooves of this type but that it is possibly due to the poor conservation of the surface of the finds), and eleven fragments of the type Hayes 71 (fig. 1, 4), dated between 50 AD and the second half of the 2nd century AD. A small fragment of a bottom (fig. 2, 3) with a *rosetta* stamp is probably related to one of these bowls (this kind of stamp is dated between the Flavian and Trajan eras, Hayes 1985: 67). Nine fragments of the type Hayes 76 are also documented; given the small dimensions, it is always documented in its variant A (fig. 1, 5). It is more ancient and belongs to the transitional phase between the production B1 and B2 or to the earlier shapes of the B2 and is dated between the third quarter and the end of the 1st century AD (Abadie-Reynal 2007: 103-105; Hayes 1985: 68). Six bowls have been catalogued as type Hayes 75 (fig. 1, 6), dated between the end of the 1st and the first half of the 2nd century AD. Four items can be identified with the cup type Hayes 70. All the finds from *Hadrianopolis* belong to the later variant of the type, dating between 70 and 125 AD (fig. 1, 7). Due to the poor surface preservation, they don't always show the typical notched decoration (fig. 2, 2).

Very few of the finds are recognisable as other ESB types: three specimens of Hayes 74 A (fig. 1, 8), two of the type Hayes 79 (fig. 1, 9) and only one is identifiable with the type Hayes 58, all belonging to the end of the 1st-beginning of the 2nd century AD.

The amount of ESB found in *Hadrianopolis* is among the most significant in Epirus (for an overview of ESB documentation in Southern Illyria and Chaonia: Shehi 2015: 235-247). In all the territory of Southern Illyria and Epirus, the plate/bowl Hayes 60 is the most frequently recorded type. This is also true for the rest of Epirus, like in Nikopolis (Angeli 2007: 529, 357). This type is present in numerous variants both in dimensions and in rim shape. However, in all the Illyrian-Epirote territory, a marked prevalence of this type over all the other types of ESB is a common relevant pattern. This disproportion in documentation between type Hayes 60 and others tends to increase progressively during the 2nd century AD. In most of the Illyrian-Epirote sites from this time, the type Hayes 60 is the most represented shape among EBS finds, especially in its later variants; the second type most present in the territory is Hayes 80 (Shehi 2015: 241-243. Considering what is reported by Shehi, only Phoinike seems to have a shorter gap of documentation between types Hayes 60 and Hayes 80). Given this brief overview, it is clear that *Hadrianopolis* perfectly follows a trend common to the entire Illyrian-Epirote region (for a comparative overview of ESB documentation



Fig. 2. Some details on ESB finds from *Hadrianopolis*.

in other sites of the territory in relation to *Hadrianopolis* see: Ciccarelli 2012. Similar contexts are known over the entire Adriatic region. For recent overviews of Eastern imports and distribution, with a focus on the Ionian-Adriatic area, see De Mitri 2012 and 2013. For recent overviews on Eastern imports and distribution, with a focus on the Northern Adriatic area, see: Maggi 2006 and 2007; Maggi and Merlatti 2007; Maggi and Starac 2000; Mandruzzato 2008; Maselli Scotti 2017; Ventura and Maggi 2020; Žerjal and Vidrih Perko 2017).

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### Plain ware pottery, regional “sigillata” and local production

The almost total absence of open forms, except for basins, in the plain, non-coated ware production matches the presence of a conspicuous group of bowls and dishes identified as regional “sigillata” production with examples produced in a coarser fabric, with a red-brownish, poor-quality red slip. As already mentioned, both productions, especially the former, imitate forms typical of Eastern productions, especially ESB.

The main shapes recognisable in both productions are imitations of Hayes 60, flanged bowls, and small *ollae* Marabini LXVIII (on the presence of this type of olla in *Hadrianopolis*, see: Cingolani 2012; Perna, Capponi and Cingolani 2014: 141-142. For an overview of the imitations of this type in local productions, see Cingolani and Xavier de Silva 2020: 97). Only the form of the so-called *olla a collarino* seems to be also imitated in non-coated plain ware pottery, while the sigillata inspirations are recognisable only in the red-brownish slipped productions. The local coarser red-brownish slipped production (group C of Cingolani and Xavier de Silva 2020) belongs to clay fabric group B, which has been identified as local. It is characterised by a soft, powdery texture, a colour showing shades from hazel to pale red/pink, and a frequent presence of white inclusions, sometimes visible on the surface. As mentioned above, this local production, probably inspired by both sigillata productions and imitations circulating in the Mediterranean and regional

networks, is characterised by a broader repertoire of shapes, including both open forms (**fig. 3**), primarily bowls and cups, and closed shapes, such as jars, flagons, and bottles.

In layers where this production is documented and associated with ESB imports, it is possible to identify some plain, non-coated, ware shapes that are more frequently present than others. Variants of jugs and bottles (**fig. 4, 1-4**), characterised by a rim moulded on the exterior surface, are the most recurrent finds (Capponi already recognised this type of jug as typical of the imperial contexts of *Hadrianopolis* production, with evolutions of the rim shape that go from the 2nd to the 5th century and beyond. Capponi 2012: 172). Some of these items show signs of a possible pitch internal coating (as pointed out by Reynolds, some vases that we could identify as jugs or flagons might have been used to transport some specific products, at least on a regional market. Reynolds 2020: 1). Of the bottles and jugs documented in the same layers it is worth mentioning two fragments of bottles or jugs with tronco-conical necks characterised by deep grooves (**fig. 4, 5-6**). The type can be compared to the jug found during the Vrina Plain excavations in Butrint, where Reynolds identifies it as an imported one-handed jug documented in layers of the early and mid-3rd century AD (Butrint's fragment found in the context 1083 is pitched. Reynolds 2020: 36, figure 3.4 n. 3). Moreover, two further fragments of grooved bottles with a flaring rim (**fig. 4, 7-8**) can be compared with the ones Mano found in the necropolis of Apollonia, which would date them to the 2nd-3rd century AD (Mano 1974: 202, tab. V.7-8).

Significantly, this synthetic overview allows us to propose some preliminary considerations about local coarse production. At least during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, we can say with evidence that *Hadrianopolis* saw a local coarse production that could be divided into two main groups, albeit belonging to the same fabrics. The first group is characterised by the absence of any coating and is made up almost entirely of closed forms (*ollae*, bottles, jars) and basins.

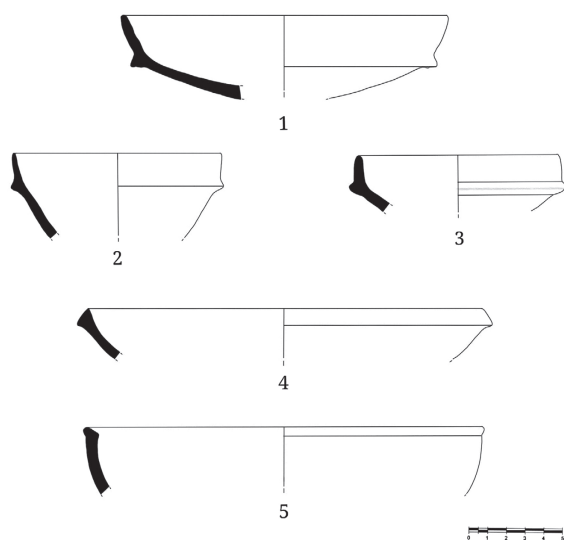
In contrast, the second group is characterised by a certain variety of shapes but includes nearly the entire production of open tableware shapes like bowls and dishes, sometimes inspired by the most common sigillata types circulating in the Mediterranean at the time.

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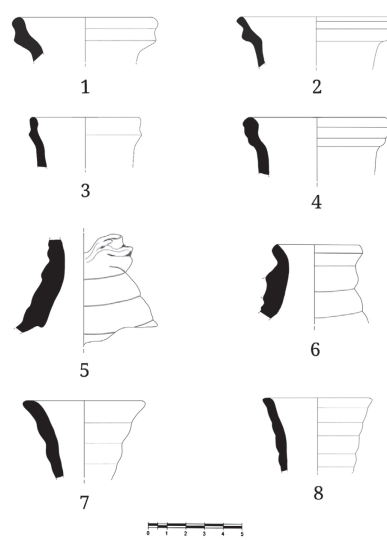
### The cooking wares: some remarks on local and imported productions

Concerning the cooking ware pottery, which is the most substantial class quantitatively speaking, it should be noted that most of the diagnostic fragments found in the contexts investigated presented local fabrics. Among all the fragments, cooking pots with bifid rims (**fig. 5, 1**) prevail. Specimens that we can relate to the Albanian production of *Illyrian Cooking Ware*, a typology that unites both sides of the Adriatic (for a general overview of this production and references for the Albanian area: Shehi 2016: 210 and 218, fig. 6; for Southern Italy: De Mitri 2010: 686, fig. 7, p. 686; Semeraro 1992: 69, fig. 4.2 nn. 310-313). Specifically, the most documented type is Type 1 of Shehi (ICW 1. See: Shehi 2016: 216, fig. 1.1). These diagnostic fragments are linked to contexts dated to the 2nd-3rd cent. AD. The fabric of almost all specimens can be considered local. Some of these can be distinguished since they present different clay: solid, with reddish tonalities, the same described by Shehi and found in *Dyrrachium* (**fig. 6, 1**). Another specimen with the same clay (**fig. 6, 2**) refers to Type ICW 3 found in Apollonia (Shehi 2016: 216, fig. 2.1).

Of the *Hadrianopolis*' cooking wares, a single specimen of ICW 6 (**fig. 5, 2**) is preserved. As pointed out by Shehi, this type has an oblique body with deep-sharp grooves on the outer face plain, undistinguished rim with a flat upper face (Shehi 2016: 216, fig. 2.4). This observation is a strong argument for including *Hadrianopolis* within the Epirote and Illyrian production that shared forms and types.



**Fig. 3.** Examples of cups and bowls produced in the local coarse red-slip production.



**Fig. 4.** Plain ware bottles and jugs.

In light of the artefacts found in the contexts investigated we would also make the following considerations regarding the cooking wares of *Hadrianopolis*. From a technological point of view, what characterises this group is the presence of less rough fabric than that which could be called '*rozza terracotta*'. The fabric is marked by chromatic variations ranging from red/orange to beige; some seem to have traces of a cover. It is relevant to note here that many of the artefacts analysed do not present the typical burns of contact with fire (fig. 6, 3). As already suggested by Shehi, these artefacts could have been used as storage vessels (Shehi 2016: 210). This type of production was likely used for other purposes, showing that cooking ware is a much more fluid category than has been supposed. Not every pot was probably intended to be exposed to fire but rather some might have been used to preserve and serve hot food, since pots with a more refined fabric, such as plain ware and fine wares, did not have good refractory properties.

Among the cooking ware fragments examined, some show a different fabric, which is therefore identified as non-local, possibly belonging to *Aegean Cooking Ware*, given the typological classification of the shapes belonging to this fabric group. The presence of artefacts from this area among the finds from *Hadrianopolis* is a further demonstration of the existence of a strong relationship with the Aegean and the full integration of the city into the Mediterranean trade.

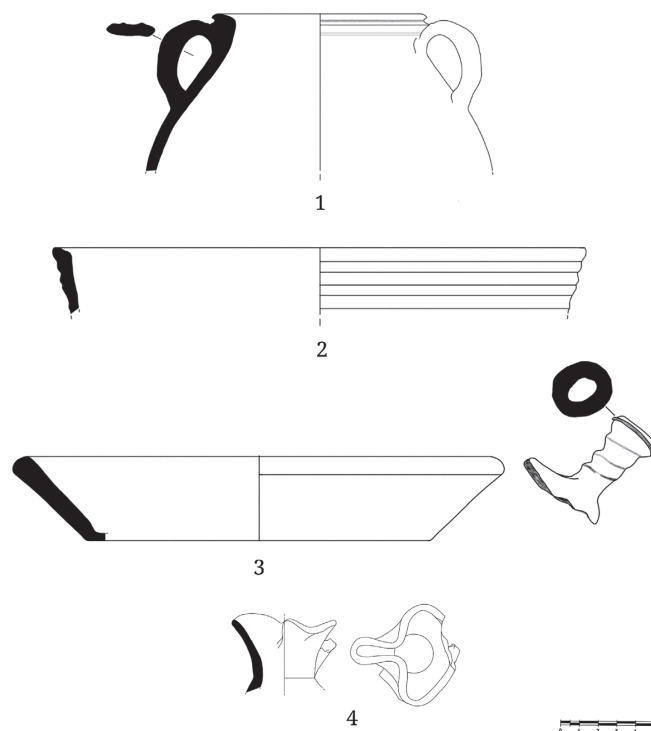


Fig. 5. Cooking wares from *Hadrianopolis*.

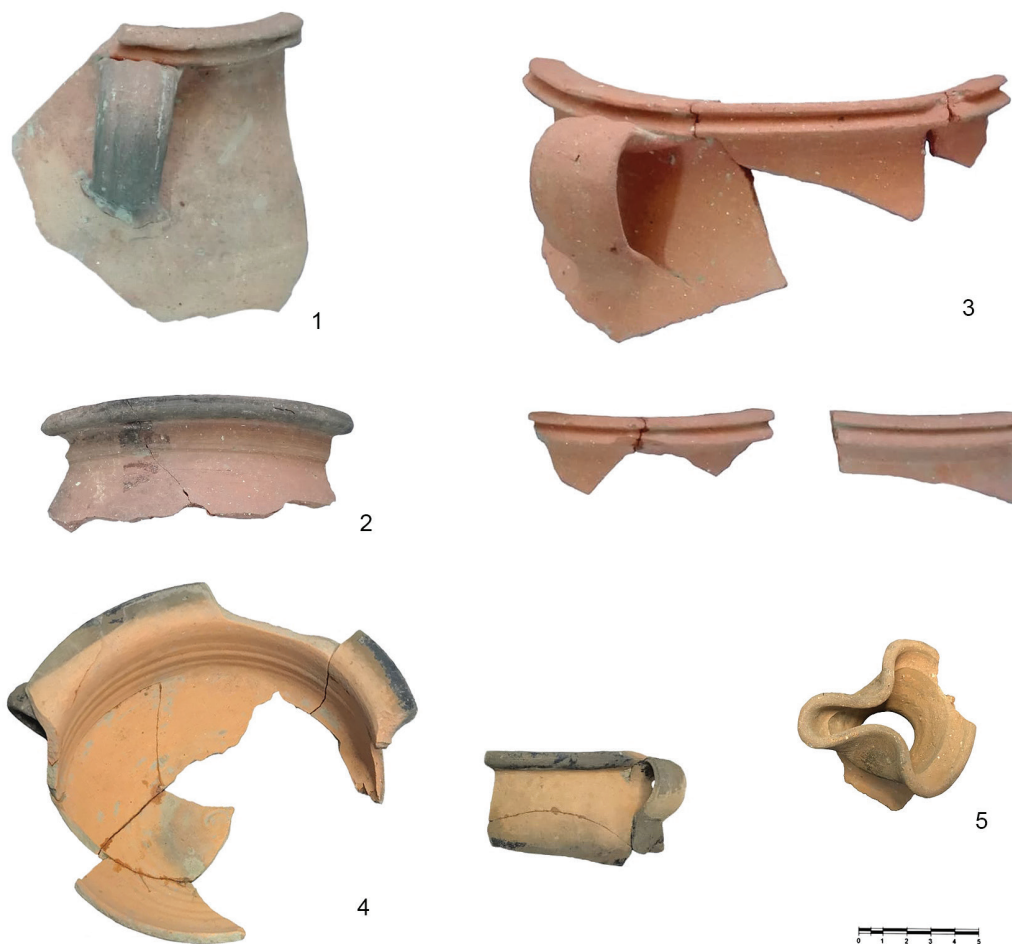


Fig. 6. Cooking wares from *Hadrianopolis*.

It should be noted that even when the fabric seems local, the Aegean appears to be the dominant reference model, testifying to a particular receptivity towards these productions (as pointed out by Tubaldi 2012). Specifically, in the kitchens of *Hadrianopolis*, the Aegean set included mainly casseroles, pans and trefoil-mouthed jugs (Istenič and Schneider 2000). The fragments analysed are framed within the phase of *Hadrianopolis*' greater development following the Hadrian foundation, mainly in layers of the 2nd-3rd century AD.

A group of specimens, possibly identifiable as casseroles from their typical features, is of possible Aegean origin due to the type of fabric (chamois colour, smooth to the touch and metallic sound) is. In most cases, only the rim (the oblique rims vary in thickness) and part of the straight wall are preserved. From the morphological point of view, they recall the Fulford casserole 29.1 (Fulford 1984:186, fig. 70, nr. 29) and are specimens also produced locally.

Of certain Aegean origin (for comparison see Istenič and Schneider 2000: 345, fig. 4.) is an exemplar of a casserole (fig. 6, 4) characterised by a raised, outstretched rim, handles with a flattened section attached directly to the rim, a carinated body, and a convex, umbilicated bottom. Its fabric has a pinkish colour and shows marked blackening from usage.

The contexts investigated have also returned some specimens of pans with rounded rims, thick walls, flat bottoms, a chamois and micaceous fabric, used as *patellae* or *sartago* (fig. 5, 3), which means as frying pans to prepare sauces or fry. Among the specimens analysed, some have traces of red paint inside. A tubular device with spiral ribs was used as a handle, of which there are two specimens; the purpose of the hole in the centre was to insert an additional handle, probably wooden. The differences in the fabric compared to the typical cooking wares of *Hadrianopolis* may suggest that they are imports. However, without further evidence or laboratory analysis, it is not yet possible to establish this with certainty.

Some portions of trilobed rims pertinent to trefoil-mouthed jugs are of certain Aegean production (fig. 5, 5 and fig. 6, 5), perhaps of Phocian production. These specimens are characterised by a grey colour on the outside and a light orange shade on the inside. The same fabric is recognisable on a lid grip the rim of which is not preserved, a fragment of a handle and some ribbed walls. The same shape is also reproduced in local fabric, further evidence that the Aegean forms were the dominant reference model in *Hadrianopolis*.

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## Conclusions

Having a look at the records of the finds, it is possible to make some preliminary considerations which await further investigation and confirmation with the completion and publication of the final stages of excavations at *Hadrianopolis*<sup>2</sup>.

As already noted in the paragraph on ESB, the presence of the plate/bowl Hayes 60 is not only predominant compared to other types, but this gap grows over the course of time, especially from the second half of the 2nd century. Concerning the presence of ESB in the stratigraphy of the site, it is interesting to note that all the types that are not identifiable with the plate/bowl Hayes 60 tend to be documented in layers with residual material and, in general, with a significant amount of Italian sigillata, thin-walled pottery and residual black-gloss pottery. This observation can be related to the gradual decrease in ESB imports, of which there are a greater variety of forms in the earlier stages. ESB imports are restricted almost exclusively to Hayes 60 and 80 in the latter stages of importation (for further considerations see: Ciccarelli 2012; Shehi 2015: 240-247). The only type that does not always follow this trend and seems, therefore, more homogeneously documented, is the bowl Hayes 80, which is indeed the second most documented type.

The presence of ESB, when significant, reveals a preference for the later and more standardised shapes of the plate/bowl Hayes 60, which in many cases is the only type present in layers dated after the 2nd century AD. Residual ESB is present in some layers which show a significant amount of African Red Slip ware (these layers generally include also African cookware, Late Roman Amphoras and late Epirote amphora types) dated from the 4th century AD: in this case the only EBS type recorded is Hayes 60 in its later variants.

The most recurrent association in almost all layers where ESB is documented is the one of this class with a group of glass vessels characterised by fire-rounded and enlarged rims, mainly belonging to the type Is. 85b, widely spread in the Western and Eastern Mediterranean during the 2nd and 3rd centuries (Foy et al. 2018).

The consistent regional production of "sigillata" and the coarser local red-slip production are documented in significant quantities in the same layers where numerous finds of ESB are reported, especially when the layer includes a broad chronological span of imports from the 2nd and the 3rd century. This data confirms a noteworthy vivacity of the site between the 2nd and the 3rd century AD, shown simultaneously by the imports and the production. *Hadrianopolis* was therefore capable of long and medium-distance commerce, following the trend of the major cities of the Mediterranean, but also of a significant production, inspired by the most common items circulating at the time. The latter was not random or sporadic but part of a well-organised system of imports and productions that resulted in a non-coated plain ware production that perfectly filled the gap in the tableware and utilitarian shapes that were not imported or produced with a red coating (see: Cingolani and Xavier de Silva 2020).

Concerning the cooking wares, as mentioned above, the presence of the Illyrian cooking ware, often in association with ESB and Aegean cooking ware, collocates *Hadrianopolis*

<sup>2</sup> I here thank again Professor Roberto Perna and Sofia Cingolani for the possibility to refer to the preliminary database of the material from the excavation missions 2011-2017, to which I have contributed for the part concerning common ware pottery, Easter Sigillata and the local

coarse red-slip production. I also thank Valentina Capradossi for the preliminary data on amphoras. A more complete overview of the material associations and further conclusions will be given in *Hadrianopolis III*, which is currently under redaction and expected to be published between the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025.

firmly within the context of the Adriatic Sea. However, it should be noted that despite their existence confirming and adding more elements to the commercial contacts of the city with the Eastern Mediterranean, the presence of the Aegean imports is not conspicuous. Nonetheless, they are mostly documented in association with 2nd-3rd century imports and productions.

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