

Late Hellenistic Red-Slip Ware in Olbia

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Late Hellenistic red-slip ware has not previously been identified at Olbia. As a rule, the preservation of Late Hellenistic strata of the second half of the 2nd to the first half of the 1st century BC is poor, since such strata were disturbed in later periods. Furthermore, this was a period of decline in Olbia and until now it can be viewed as one of the 'dark' periods in the city's history.¹

The present investigation of the late Hellenistic red-slip ware in Olbia is based on the excavation of sector NGS,² which is located in the northern part of the Lower city in Olbia. Red-slip ware is not numerous from this sector and, in general, it cannot be connected with the main period of the city's existence, the Hellenistic period.³ The group of early red-slip ware can be dated around the 2nd-the first half of the 1st century BC. Some pieces were found in dateable contexts, which provided an opportunity to narrow their date. Some fragments of Asia Minor and Pontic production centres have no analogies in the published literature on red-slip ware.

The group of the late Hellenistic red-slip ware from Olbia is presented by two types of jugs, two types of bowls, one type of cup, two types of plates as well as skyphoi, beakers, saltcellars, a krater and a lekanis. Some types of vessels can be dated only to the late Hellenistic period, while others continued to exist in later periods.

Jugs

Jugs are not numerous – a phenomenon which is characteristic of red-slip ware in general.

Type 1. Fragment of a jug with relatively high and broad cylindrical neck, ledge below the rim which is out-turned horizontally and bent down (Ø of rim: 11.7 cm). Traces of the handle are preserved (Fig. 1.1). The clay is light-orange (2.5YR 5/8-6/8), with inclusions of lime and sand. The slip is red-orange (7.5YR 6/4-5YR 6/6), with irregular traces of the brush. It was found in a closed context, which is dated to the middle of the Hellenistic period (before? ca. 225-200 BC). A close analogy from the Athenian Agora is dated ca. 250-210 BC.⁴ More often, similar jugs are dated to the 2nd century BC-2nd century AD.⁵

Type 2. Fragment of a jug with rounded bulging neck and a spout (Ø of rim(?): 6.6 cm) (Figs. 1.2; 2.1). The clay is red-pink (5YR 6/6-5/6), with lime inclusions and mica. The slip is red (2.5YR 5/8), of poor quality, and preserved only partly. A close analogy is dated presumably to the 1st century BC.⁶

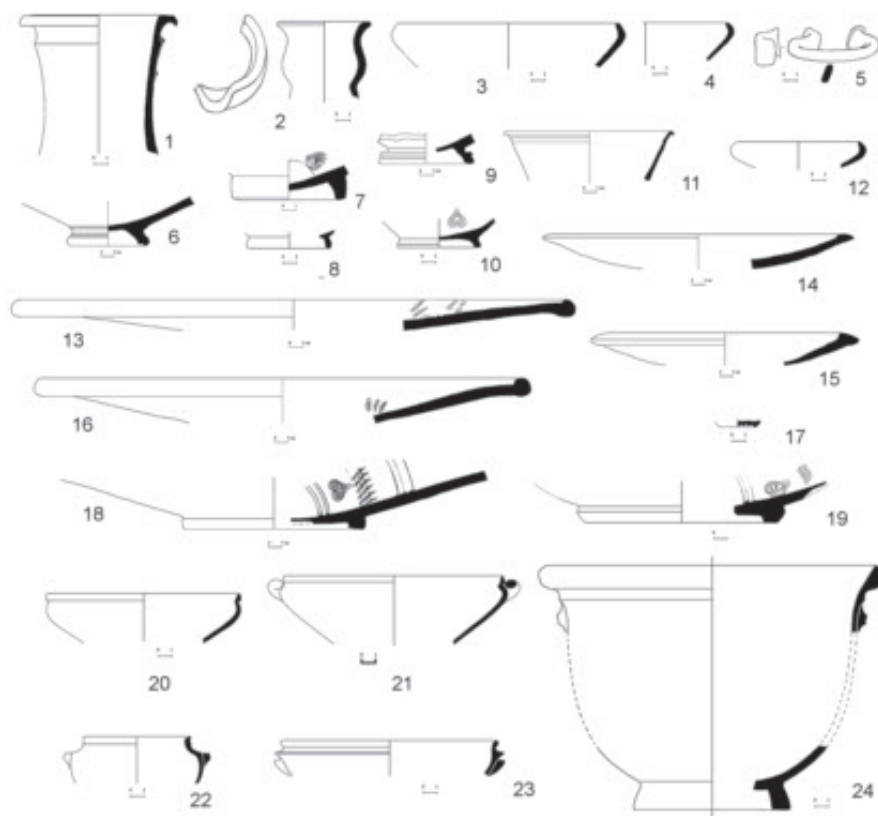


Fig. 1. Olbia. Late Hellenistic red-slip ware, drawings. Jugs: 1 – type 1, 2 – type 2; bowl-cups: 3, 4 – type 1, 5 – type 2; cups: 6, 9, 11; bases of cups: 7, 8, 10; 12 – saltcellar; plates: 13, 16, 18, 19 – type 1, 14, 15 – type 2; 20, 21 – skyphoi; 17, 22 – beakers; 23 – lekane; 24 – krater.

Bowls-cups

Bowl-cups are more numerous, especially of type 1.

Type 1. Fragments of bowl-cups with rounded walls, incurving and slightly sharpened rim (\varnothing of rim(?): 13–15 cm) (Figs. 1.3 and 4; 2.2 and 3). The clay is reddish-pink (10R 5/6), with very fine mica, or cream-coloured (7.5YR 6/4–6/6), with very fine mica and quartz in places. The slip is dark-red (10R 5/6–4/6 or 10R 4/4–4/6). Found in late Hellenistic contexts. According to the clay and the slip they were manufactured in Pergamon.

A similar shape of black-glazed bowl is known from the first quarter of the 2nd century BC.⁷ Close analogies, in red-slip, at Pergamon are dated to the third quarter of the 2nd to the first half of the 1st century BC.⁸

Type 2. Fragments of cylindrical, conical bowl-cups with horizontal handles

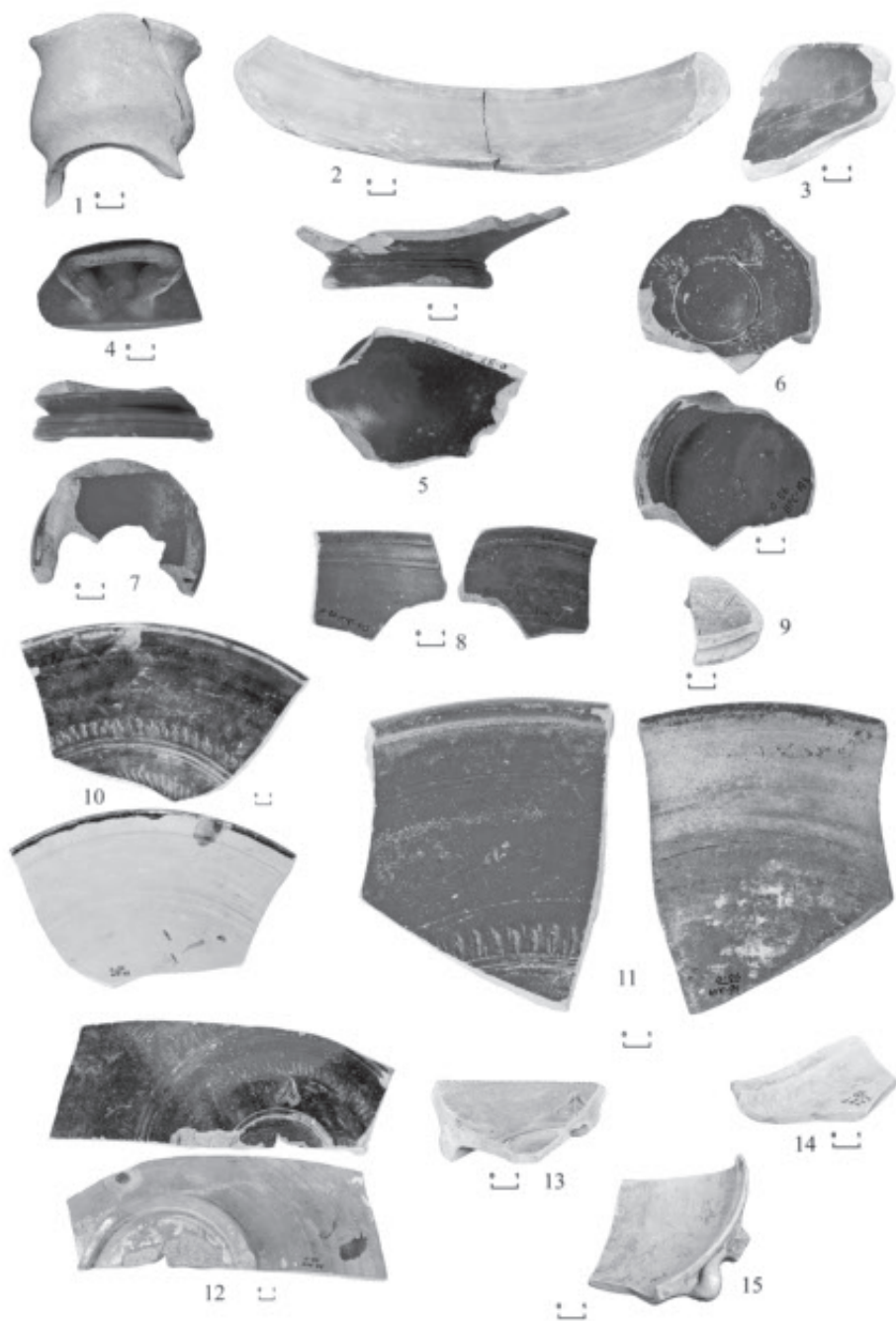


Fig. 2. Olbia. Late Hellenistic red-slip ware, photos. 1 – jug, type 2; bowl-cups: 2, 3 – type 1, 4 – type 2; cups: 5, 7, 8; bases of cups: 6, 9; 10 – 13 – plates, type 1; 14, 15 – skyphoi.

(Ø of rim: 18-22 cm) (Figs. 1.5; 2.4). Vessels of this type were imported to Athens from Knidos at least from the second quarter of the 2nd century BC. They had been manufactured for a long period in different centres with slight alterations.⁹ They were probably brought to Olbia mainly from Pergamon and are dated from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD. The clay is red-pink (2.5YR 6/6-5/6), with lime inclusions and mica, or red (10YR 5/6), with mica, and rare lime inclusions. The slip is red (5YR 6/6-5/6) or dark-red (10YR 5/6-4/6).

One fragment was found in a late Hellenistic context at Olbia.

Cups

Cups are not numerous and represented by one type. The descriptions of three bases, which are difficult to attribute to any particular type of cup, are presented separately.

Fragment of the upper part of a cup with tapering walls, a small out-turned rim (Ø of rim: 12 cm) (Figs. 1.11; 2.8), probably on a profiled ring base (Ø: 6.5-8 cm) (Figs. 1.6 and 9; 2. 5 and 7). Below the rim are two grooves on the inside and a fillet on the outside. The clay is pinkish-orange (2.5YR 6/8), with fine lime inclusions. The slip is dark-red (2.5YR 5/8-4/8). A close parallel is dated to ca. 10 BC-20/30 AD.¹⁰

Bases of cups and skyphoi of Pergamene manufacture that are close in shape are dated from the late 2nd century BC to the second quarter of the 1st century AD.¹¹ One such base was found in a late Hellenistic context at Olbia.

Bases

Base of a cup on a ring-foot, decorated with a scratched groove and four stamped palmettes (Ø: 8 cm) (Figs. 1.7; 2.6). The clay is pinkish beige (7.5YR 8/4), with sandy inclusions. The slip is dark-red (10R 5/6-4/6). Found in a late Hellenistic context. The piece is of Pergamene manufacture, belonging to the late 2nd century BC-the early 1st century AD.¹²

Base of a cup on a ring-foot (Ø: 6 cm) (Fig. 1.8). The clay is pinkish beige (7.5YR 8/4), with sandy inclusions. The slip is dark-red (10R 5/6-4/6). The piece is similar to the previous one.

Base of a cup on a ring-foot (Ø: 6.2 cm) (Figs. 1.10; 2.9) with a stamped ornament in the shape of ivy leaves. The clay is creamy, dark-gray in the break (5YR 7/4-7/6), with mica and lime inclusions, as well as coarse inclusions of quartz. The slip is dark-red (10R 4/6-4/8). Parallels are unknown, but production in Asia Minor is likely. A date in the 2nd-first half of the 1st century BC would accord with the general date of its context.

Plates

Plates are the most numerous group of red-slip ware in the assemblage from the sector NGS. They are represented by seven types, two of which could be dated to the late Hellenistic period.

Type 1. Rather shallow large plates with almost straight walls diverging sideways, a rounded thick rim (Ø: 35-40 cm), on a ring-foot (Ø: 13-14 cm) (Figs. 1.13, 16, 18, 19; 2.10-13). They are decorated with a stamped pattern in the form of incisions and ivy leaves, often with grooves. Only the interior surface is slipped. The clay is light, pinkish, with inclusions of river sand and rare mica. The clay is light-coloured, pink or creamy, often greyish in the break (5YR 6/4-6/6-7.5YR 7/4-6/4), with coarse sand and rare mica. The slip is dark-red (10R 5/6-4/6-10R 4/8), or dark-red and brown (2.5YR 5/6-4/2-2.5YR 4/4-4/3).

This is the first time this type of plate has been found in Olbia, and it is absent in the complexes and layers of later periods. No analogies can be found in the published literature. In their shape, plates of type 1 are similar only to African Red Slip ware.¹³ However, such late dates are impossible for Olbia, since no life existed here later than the 4th century AD. Furthermore, the clay and slip of these plates differ from that of African production and rather resemble products of Asia Minor. These pieces are possibly connected with the beginning of the red-slip production in the centres of Asia Minor from at least the 2nd century BC. This supposition is confirmed by the find of the base of the bottom (?) of a cup with similar ornament in a late Hellenistic context (Fig. 1.10). A similar ornamentation is noted on plates of another type from Pergamon, which are dated to the 3rd-the middle of the 1st centuries BC.¹⁴

Type 2. Rather deep plates with slightly rounded walls diverging sideways and a thickened rim (Ø: 17-21 cm), possibly on a ring-foot (Fig. 1.14-15). The clay is creamy pink (5YR 6/4-6/6). The slip is dark-red (10R 4/8).

Close parallels in shape appear in black-glazed plates of 200-175 BC.¹⁵ Thus, these type 2 plates, as has been postulated for the type 1 plates, are likely connected with the beginning of the production of red-slip ware in the centres of Asia Minor in the 2nd century BC.

Skyphoi

Skyphoi are represented by the upper parts of two vessels. The rim is slightly out-turned (Ø: 15-16 cm), handles horizontal and pressed (Figs. 1.20-21; 2.14-15). The clay is creamy pink (7.5YR 6/4), with mica and lime inclusions. The slip is bright-red (10R 6/8-5/8), worn on the inside, and on the outer surface the slip, also worn, is applied only on the rim and edge wall.

There is no close parallel to this shape, however it undoubtedly imitates the shapes of skyphoi of the Hellenistic colour-coated ware A, which are dated

to the 3rd-2nd century BC.¹⁶ The two fragments from Olbia are products of Pontic centres.¹⁷ The appearance of such vessels could probably be related to the period before ca. 140 BC on the basis of the general dating of the context in which one of the fragments was found. Nevertheless, this fact does not exclude the possibility that similar vessels could be manufactured in a later period. Probably, the Type 8 red-slip ware bowls found in Olbia (as defined in Krapivina 1993) are further developments of these vessels.¹⁸

Kraters

Kraters are represented by fragments of a rim (Ø: 24 cm) and a base (Ø: 12.8 cm) (Fig. 1.24). The clay is creamy pink (7.5YR 7/4-6/4), with sparse mica, and lime inclusions. The slip is dark-red (2.5YR 4/6), worn, and applied only on the inside surface. The shape of this krater possibly derives from the kraters found in the Athenian Agora dating to the third quarter of the 3rd century BC to 180 BC.¹⁹ The krater published here evidently belongs to products of the centres of Asia Minor and on the basis of the general dating of its context it may be dated to the late Hellenistic period.

Beakers

Beakers are rare and often very fragmented.

Fragment of the upper part of a beaker with rounded body and high profiled rim (Ø: 8 cm) and two handles (Fig. 1.22). The clay is red-pink (2.5YR 5/6), with fine mica and lime inclusions. The slip is red, dull (10R 5/6-4/6), and on the inside it is applied only on the rim. No close analogies have been found. It belongs to the production of the Pontic centres.²⁰ Found in a late Hellenistic context.

Base of a beaker (Ø: 3.3 cm) (Fig. 1.17). The clay is pink (10R 5/6-4/6), with mica, lime inclusions. The slip is red, dull (10R 5/8-4/8). It is of Pergamene manufacture, dated 160-60 BC.²¹

Lekanides

One fragment of the upper part of a lekanis was found with traces of repair. The rim is slightly out-turned and thickened (Ø: 21 cm) (Fig. 1.23). The clay is pink (5YR 6/4), with fine lime inclusions, rare mica. The slip is red (10R 5/6-4/6), applied on the rim inside and outside, and below the rim as a 2 cm wide band and a 0.4 cm wide band on the inside. No analogies have been found. This fragment belongs to the production of the Pontic centres,²² and likely dates to the 2nd century BC-1st century AD.

Saltcellars

One fragment of the upper part of a vessel with rounded walls and incurving rim (Ø: 9 cm) (Fig. 1.12). The clay is red (10R 6/8), with mica. The slip is dark-red (10R 5/8), more lustrous on the outside with brown spots in places. A similar shape of black-glazed ware is known from the last quarter of the 4th century BC;²³ however, close analogies to its form in red-slip ware are dated to the first half of the 2nd century BC²⁴-early 1st century BC.²⁵

Conclusion

Thus, as a result of this investigation of the red-slip ware from Sector NGS in Olbia certain red-slip vessels are identified as belonging to the late Hellenistic period either through parallels found elsewhere or on the basis of the contexts in which they were found at Olbia. This early group of red-slip pottery is, thus, established in Olbia for the first time. Some of the shapes continued to be manufactured later. Others, however, have no analogies in the published literature and are absent in the later complexes of the first centuries AD in Olbia.

Further investigations of the late Hellenistic red-slip ware from Olbia may shed light on the origin and dating of these vessels.

Notes

- 1 Krapivina 2005, 249. [Valentina Krapivina died on March 30, 2013. She was a dear friend to the Black Sea Study Centre and contributed immeasurably to the Centre's successes – MLJ].
- 2 Director of this sector was N.A. Lejpunskaja (†), vice director, first T.L. Samojlova, later A.V. Karjaka and P.D. Diatroptov.
- 3 The whole group of the red-slip ware from Sector NGS has been published by the author (2010).
- 4 Rotroff 2006a, 248, cat. 37 (P 16281), fig. 7, pl. 7.
- 5 Roth-Rubi 1979, 22-26, pl. 3.
- 6 Hayes 1985b, 44, sigillata orientale A, pl. IX, 6, forma 105.
- 7 See Rotroff 1997, 162, Fig. 63, 1007, 1008.
- 8 Zelle 1997, 72, fig. 16, 171, 170; Meyer-Schlichtmann 1988, pl. 30, 91, 90; Wintermeyer 2004, Katalog A, 99, 154, Typ Sch 1.1.
- 9 Rotroff 1997, 119.
- 10 Hayes 1985b, 26, sigillata orientale A, pl. IV, 9, forma 27.
- 11 Meyer-Schlichtmann 1988, 117-118, 158, pl. 7, S. 2, 3, 14, Sa 3, 9, 20, Sü 4, 29.
- 12 The closest parallel to the shape of the foot is Meyer-Schlichtmann 1988, 89, 99-100, 125-126, pl. 5, 36, VK 24; to the shape of the palmette – pl. 5, 36, VK 19, 22.
- 13 Hayes 1972, 160-165, form 104 A,B – 530-600 AD.
- 14 Meyer-Schlichtmann 1988, 147-148, pl. 18, 34, 35.
- 15 Rotroff 1997, fig. 48, 670, 672, 673.
- 16 Domžalski 2007, 172, fig. 4, a, b, c.
- 17 According to K. Domžalski's identification.

- 18 See Krapivina 1993, fig. 47, 7, 8.
- 19 Rotroff 1997, 138-139, fig. 42, 590, 591.
- 20 According to K. Domžalski's identification.
- 21 Hübner 1993, 48-50, fig. 8, 109.
- 22 According to K. Domžalski's identification.
- 23 Rotroff 1997, 162, fig. 62, 992.
- 24 Jantzen 2004, 317, pl. 84, 1851.
- 25 Hayes 1985b, 84, sigillata cipriota, pl. XIX, 12, forma P 20.