The Greeks and Romans in the Black Sea and the Importance of the Pontic Region for the Graeco-Roman World (7th century BC-5th century AD): 20 Years On (1997-2017)

Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress on Black Sea Antiquities (Constanța – 18-22 September 2017)



edited by
Gocha R. Tsetskhladze, Alexandru Avram and James Hargrave

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Dedicated to Prof. Sir John Boardman to celebrate his exceptional achievements and his 90th birthday

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Archaeopress Archaeology



Archaeopress Publishing Ltd
Summertown Pavilion
18-24 Middle Way
Summertown
Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-758-2
ISBN 978-1-78969-759-9 (e-Pdf)

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Pontıc sıgıllata pottery from a *vıllа rustıca* ın Paphlagonıa

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(Kocaeli University, Izmit)

Abstract

Excavations uncovered a Roman *villa rustica* in the Paphlagonia region along the northern coast of Anatolia, yielding units lavishly adorned with exquisite floor mosaics, as well as items of material culture such as pottery and coins. The bulk of sherds collected from the trenches contains vessels of coarse and fine ware. Some of the fine ware pieces share common features and forms similar to that of the Pontic sigillata that are introduced in the present study.

A Roman *villa rustica*, located at the mountain village of Kadıoğlu, Çaycuma near Zonguldak, was uncovered during rescue excavations conducted by archaeologists of the Karadeniz Ereğli Museum.[1] Çaycuma, a town 18 km inland, is situated by the west bank of the Billaios (modern Filyos Çay), and Kadıoğlu is situated 5 km to its west at an altitude of 280 m.

The excavation site is located on the north slope of the mountain, overlooking the road from the town. Excavations uncovered a large residential structure with several units. The architectural plan of the *villa rustica* yielded at least three *cubiculi*, an oblong rectangular unit along the inner courtyard connecting the units spread around the courtyard, as well as an apsidal hall, which possibly functioned as a reception hall. Three units survived with exquisite polychrome mosaic pavements, whereas the other two units bear traces of a statumen layer, which indicates that they had been paved with mosaics which unfortunately have not survived.[2] The structure has been dated, based on architectural features, the stylistic features of the floor mosaics, and coin and pottery finds, to the last quarter of the 3rd/beginning of the 4th century AD (Figure 1).[3]

Archaeological excavation has recently increased in the Paphlagonia region, the northern parts of Anatolia, with results contributing to and enriching our knowledge of ancient settlements and cultures prevailing along the south coast of the Black Sea. A plethora of ancient material culture, particularly potsherds, has come to light through systematic excavations in the Black Sea region of Turkey, such as Pompeiopolis-Taşköprü in the city of Kastamonu, Hadianapolis-Eskipazar in the city of Karabük, Tieion-Filyos in the city of Zonguldak and Balatlar in the centre of Sinop. Rescue excavations of archaeological sites have also been undertaken by archaeologists from the local museums at Karadeniz Ereğli, Amasra and Sinop. Evaluations of the sherds uncovered in these excavations have recently begun to be published and put into the public domain, enabling comparative analysis and encouraging the pursuit of further studies.

The ceramic finds of the *villa rustica* excavations include terra sigillata vessels, some of them identified as Pontic sigillata. The fabric is well-purified and homogenous, in pink, pink-brown and orange-red colours with thinner walls, and the fine glossy slip does not cover the foot.

Hayes tentatively identified a certain type of terra sigillata uncovered by Knipovich at excavation sites in South Russia such as Olbia, Myrimekion and Tiritake, as Pontic sigillata.[4] Pontic sigillata from these excavations were examined and have features distinct from terra sigillata produced in the Mediterranean Basin. Knipovich, who first recognised the vessels, which looked similar to some in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum, presumed that they were imports from Anatolia to Olbia. Kropotkin uncovered a plethora of similar terra sigillata pottery at excavations in Bulgaria and Romania and classified them under red-slipped vessels.[5] Hayes noted that distinctions in regional characteristics should be elaborated in future studies.

Hayes also addressed the issue of the origins of Pontic sigillata, pointing to the lack of studies and publications of Roman pottery from the Pontus and Bithynia regions in Anatolia. Since then, studies of Pontic sigillata finds have increased, but their production centres still remain unknown. Zhuravlev made a classification of Pontic sigillata pottery under three main groups and 50 forms.[6]

Pontic sigillata sherds from the Çaycuma excavations bear distinctive features easily distinguishable from Eastern sigillata. The clay is well-sieved, homogenous, and has no conspicuous inclusions or has rare fine inclusions, mostly in reddish-yellow (Munsell catalogue 5YR 7/6-7/8). A glossy orange-coloured slip provides a metallic shine to the pottery. The outer lower part of the vessels are either not slipped or slipped in streaks. Most of the sherds have lost slip and the

[1] The present author was assigned as scientific supervisor of the mosaic excavations. Preliminary excavation reports with contributions by the present author have been presented to the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The excavations of the site and evaluation of the mosaics have been published in two separate monographs.
[2] Tülek and Mercan 2016.
[3] Tülek 2011.
[4] Hayes 1985; Knipovich 1929; 1949.
[5] Hayes 1985, 92; Kropotkin 1970.
[6] Zhuravlev 2011, 149.

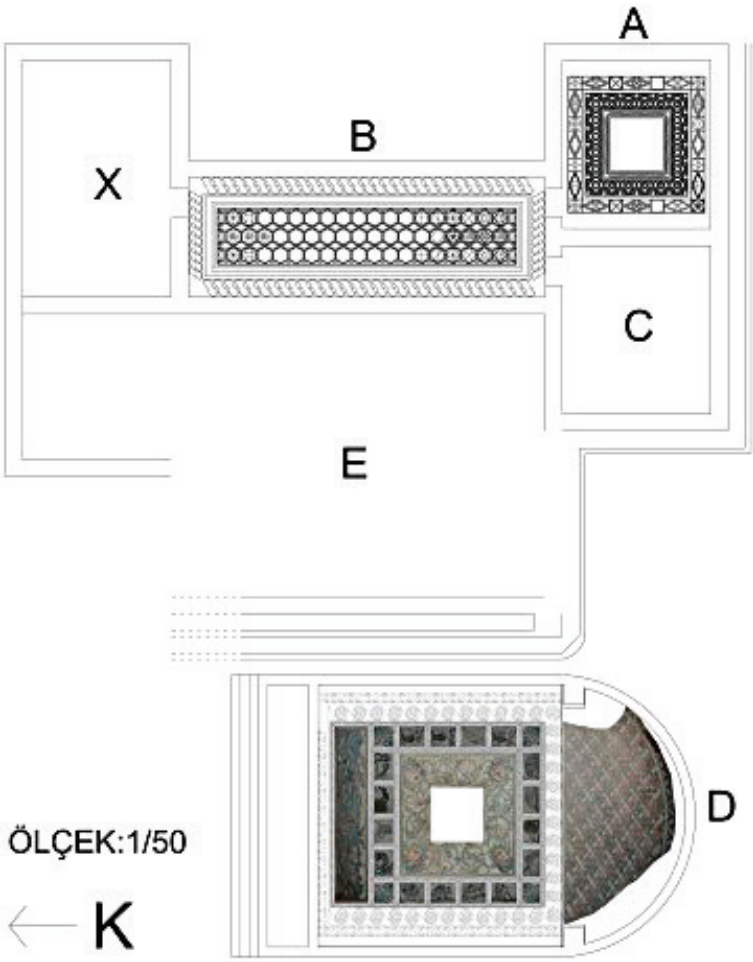


Figure 1: Plan of the Late Roman *villa rustica* and its floor mosaics.

paste is powdery. The bodies of the vessels are consistently ±3 mm thick and the thickness of the lips varies ±6-8 mm.

Two types of paste are distinguished among the Çaycuma Pontic sigillata finds: Type 1 has soft clay with fine and rare inclusions of calcite, and sand having rare tiny porosity;

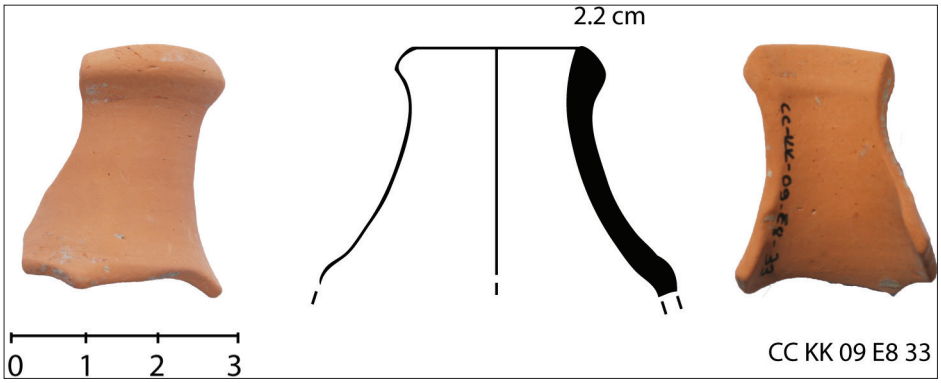


Figure 2: CC KK 09- E8- 33.

Type 2 has medium-hard clay with fine but dense inclusions of calcite and sand, one piece even has small single grog. Like Type 1, Type 2 paste is porous, as well, having tiny and densely distributed holes. The slip is glossy but in darker hues of yellowish-red (Munsell 5YR 6/8, 5/8) and slightly thicker.

Almost all of the potsherds belong to open forms: fish plates, dishes, cups and bowls. Closed forms are represented by three pieces: jugs CC KK 09- E8- 33 (Type 1 paste), CC KK 09- D6- 19 and CC KK C8- 106 (Type 2) similar to that of Pompeiopolis jugs (Figures 2-4).[7]

The hallmark of the Pontic sigillata dish with vertical rim and truncated body is represented in one piece CC KK 09- E8- 48[8] (Figure 5), as well as a cup CC KK 09- D6- 75 (Figure 6) identical to that of the Pompeiopolis finds.[9]

Plates CC KK 09- E8- 49 (Paste Type 2), CC KK 09- D6 10 and 11 (Paste Type 1), which have rims with everted flat lips that are grooved or not and are similar to those found in Belbek IV necropolis, should be dated to a later period, however.[10] The lip of plate CC KK 09- E8- 49 is grooved and finely decorated with a motif of beads.

Fish plates CC KK 09- E8- 30, 31, 116, 36 (flat base), CC KK 09- C6- 86 (flat base) all share the same clay type, colour and slip. The first three sherds are lips decorated with grooves and volutes extending to form an elaborated handle of a large oval platter. For Hayes such platters are found in the Pontic region at the end of the 1st and beginning of the 2nd century AD.[11] However, the appearance in the region of Pontic sigillata fish plates of oval shape has been attested at the end of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD.[12] Platters with volutes and laced handles have been observed as becoming widely used in North Italian sigillata in the 3rd century AD, and Pontic sigillata types of platter with handles decorated with volutes and lace are widely known at the end of the 3rd and in the 4th century.[13]

[7] Zhuravlev 2011, pl. 8.1-3.
[8] Zhuravlev 2009, fig. 9.63; 2011, pl. 2.1
[9] Zhuravlev 2011, pl. 3.1-3.
[10] Zhuravlev 2002, fig. 16.3.
[11] Hayes 1985, 96.
[12] Klenina 2003, 227.
[13] Silanteva 1958, 302, fig. 16.1; Gamberini 2003, 107.

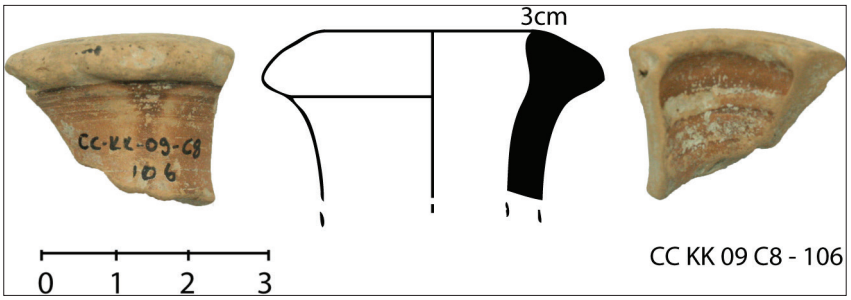
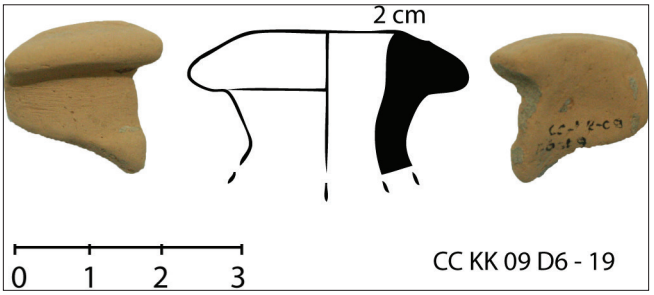


Figure 3: CC KK C8- 106.

Figure 4: CC KK 09- D6- 19.



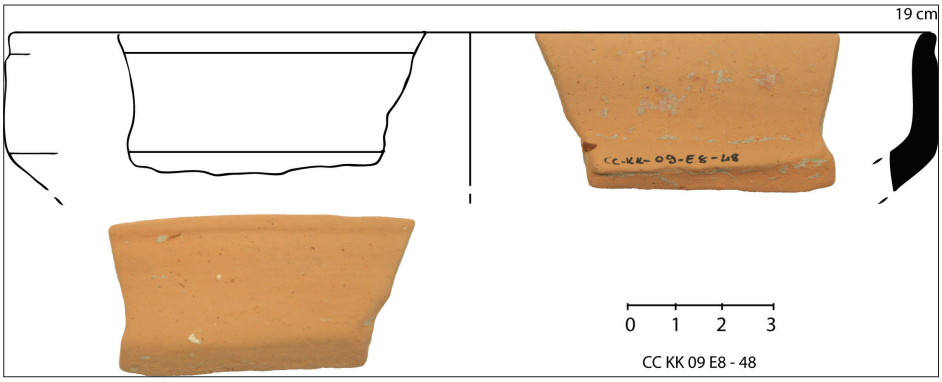


Figure 5: CC KK 09- E8- 48.

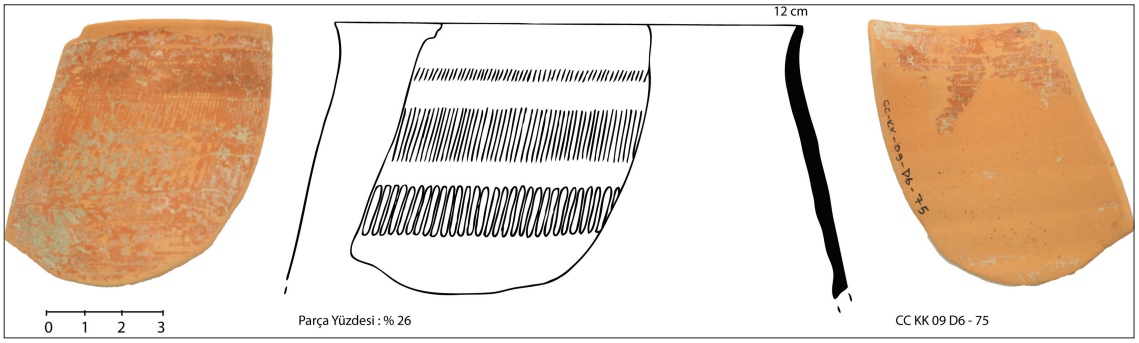


Figure 6: CC KK 09- D6- 75.

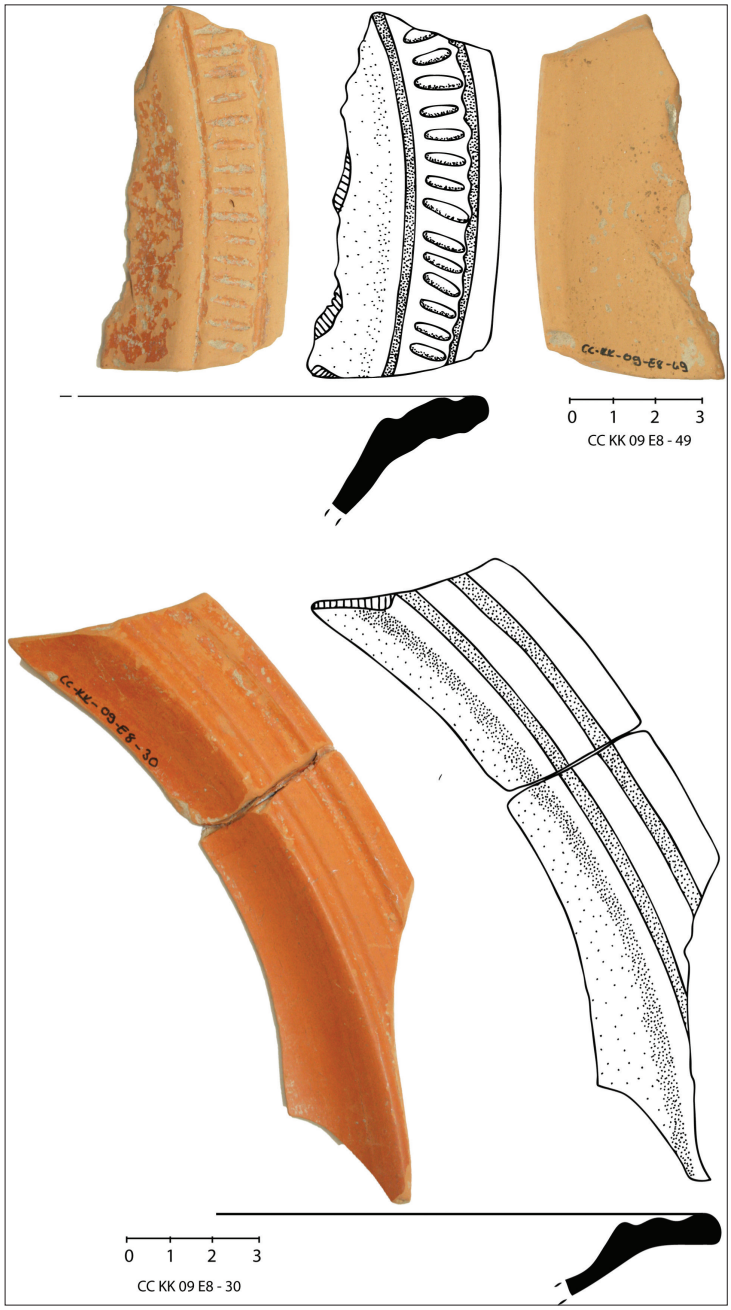


Figure 7: CC KK 09- E8- 49 and 30.

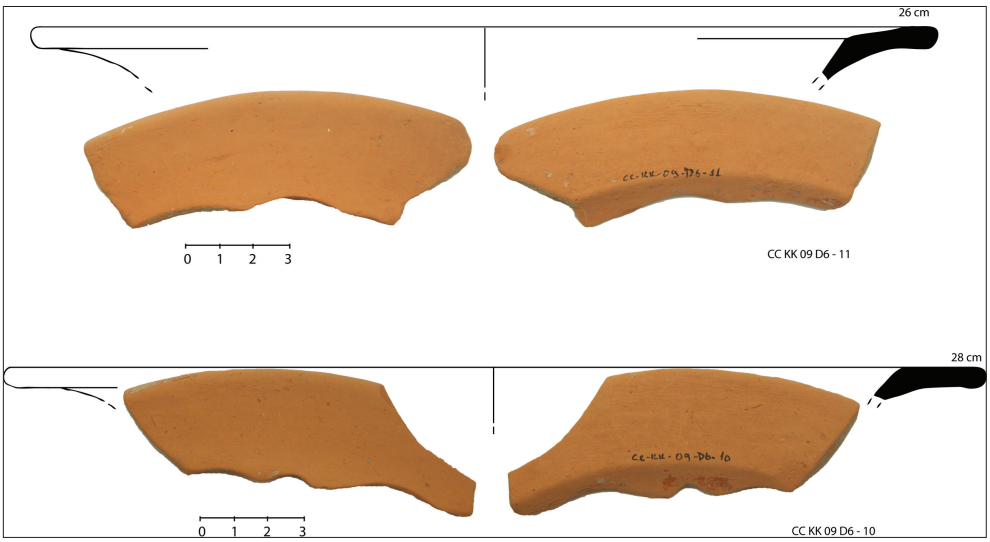


Figure 8: CC KK 09- D6 10 and 11.

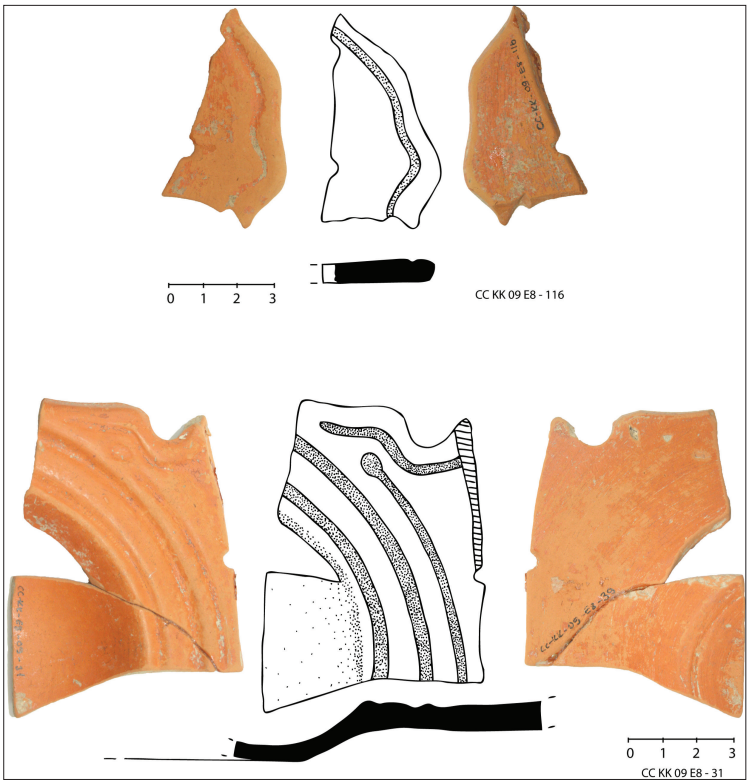


Figure 9: CC KK 09- E8- 31 and 116.

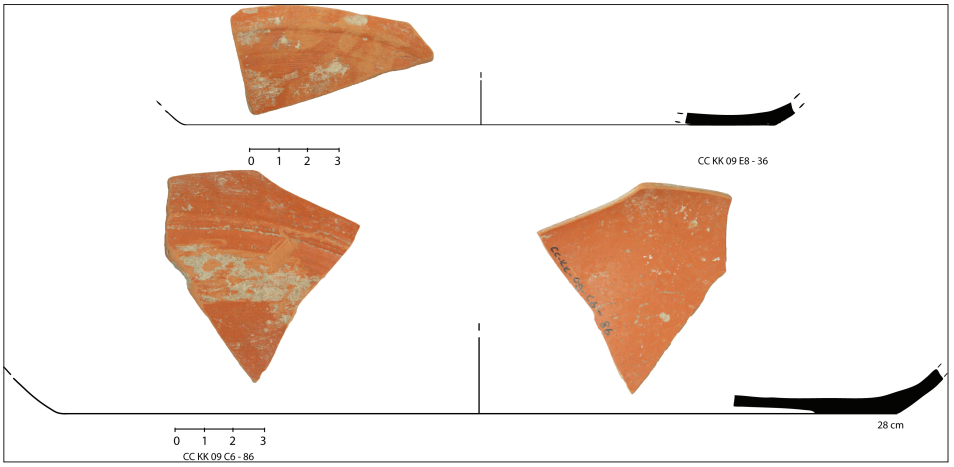


Figure 10: CC KK 09- C6- 86 and E8 36.

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