Late Roman Tableware from Argamum – “Faleză Est” Sector. Phocaean Ware

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Abstract. In this article it is analysed the pottery produced in Phocaean workshops, discovered in the “Faleză Est” sector of the late Roman fortress Argamum. The forms identified are H 1, H 2, H 3, H 4, H 5, H 8 and H 10. Most common of all by far is the form H 3. Chronologically, the studied ceramic group dates between the middle of the 4th century and the third quarter of the 7th century.


Keywords: Phocaean Red Slip Ware, Argamum, Scythia, Western Black Sea.

We continue the analysis of the potter-sherds from Argamum discovered in the “Faleză Est” sector with the Phocaean tableware (Figure 1). Known in the literature as “Late Roman C”, Phocaean tableware is widespread in the western Black Sea, especially in the 5th and 6th centuries, and Argamum is no exception. The ceramic group from the “Central Sector” of the late Roman fort at Argamum revealed that for the chronological interval mentioned above, the phocaene wares represents 80 per cent of the total tableware.

Following the processing of ceramic group found in the “Faleză Est” sector, we identified 109 typical ceramic fragments from the Phocaean area, to which we added six fragmentary plates with stamped decoration. If we take into consideration the entire sample of tableware from “Faleză Est”, presented before, we can see the apparent predominance of this type of pottery.

The first identified form is H 1, variant B, with a single specimen, to which is added another belonging to the variant H 1D (Figure 2/1–2). The bowls specific to the H 1 form appear in a series of archaeological sites in the West-pontic space, such as Halmyris. Here ceramic fragments were discovered in archaeological contexts dating from the 4th to the 6th

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2 MOCANU 2018, 340 and graph 4.
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centuries. However, most of them are from archaeological contexts dated back to 5th century. In Histria this type of pottery is known both from recent research in the Acropolis Centre-South Sector and from the archaeological excavations of the second half of the 20th century. Aegyssus is another settlement in which was attested the presence of the H 1 form, whereas a result of the excavations of the 70s of the 20th century we know eight specimens, classified in variants A, B and C. Other two sites where this type of tableware is present are Topraichioi and Ibida, in the Extra-Muros West III and Extra-Muros North I sectors. At Argamum, in addition to these two pottery-shreds identified in the “Faleză Est” sector, are added two others from the “Central Sector” of the late Roman fort. The phocaean form H 1 with the H 4 form produced at Çandarli is sometimes entangled in West-pontic area, because the H 1 form is considered the successor of the pergamenian one.

The following form produced in the Phocaean workshops, present in the studied pottery group is H 2C (Figure 2/3). This type of bowls is specific to the 5th century, and was widespread in the Mediterranean basin, but also entered the Black Sea. In the province of Scythia, the H 2 form is present in Histria, in the Acropolis Central-South sector and is dating to archaeological contexts from the beginning of the 5th century. Form H 2 also appears in the late Roman settlement of Halmyris. Following the excavations of the ’80s of the 20th century, were inventoried three ceramic fragments attributed to archaeological levels 7 and 8, thus dating in the second half of the 4th century and the first half of the 5th century. Following the study of tableware discovered between 2006 and 2014 it is being identified five other specimens. The H 2 form is present on the Danube limes in the forts from Capidava or Aegyssus. Inland the province of Scythia, the H 2 form appears at the fortress from Tropaeum Traiani and at Ibida.

3 TOPOLEANU 2000, 44–45, pl. 1/8–9, pl. 2/10–18. MOCANU 2018A, 238–239, fig. 6/1–5.
4 BĂDESCU, ILIESCU 2016, 142–143, fig. 1–2; ILIESCU et alii 2017, 47–49, fig. 1–3.
5 SUCEVEANU 1982, 84, no. 1–2, fig. 7/1–2 (Level IIIA – last quarter of the 4th–first half of the 5th centuries).
6 MOCANU, NUȚU 2017, 131–132, fig. 7/3.
7 OPAIȚ 1996, 137, pl. 56/11, 13.
8 MOCANU 2011, 232, pl. 2/10.
9 MOCANU 2014, 154, fig. 4/17.
10 MOCANU 2018, 339, fig. 2/18–19.
11 BĂDESCU, ILIESCU 2016, 144–145, fig. 5/2–3; ILIESCU et alii 2017, 51–52, fig. 7/1–4.
12 TOPOLEANU 2000, 46, pl. 2/19, pl. 3/20. No. 20 is in fact a Pontic Red Slip Form 3 dish.
13 MOCANU 2018A, fig. 6/6–8.
14 ÖPRIȘ 2003, 150, pl. 54/354.
15 MOCANU, NUȚU 2017, 132, fig. 7/4–5.
16 BOGDAN-CĂTĂNICIU, BARNEA 1979, 187, fig. 160/2.
17 MOCANU 2014, 154, fig. 4/19; MOCANU 2011, 232, pl. 2/12.
Form H 3 is by far the most representative product of Phocaean workshops, not only in the particular case of Argamum, but in the entire West-Pontic region. All the eight variants of this type of dish /bowl are identified in the ceramic group discovered in the “Faleză Est” sector. The two pottery-shreds that have classified as H 3A are a late variant (H 3A / C variant), the transition from the classic A variant to the C variant (Figure 2/4–5). These ceramic fragments represent the first attestation of the H 3A form at Argamum, because in the “Central Sector” the earliest is the H 3B form. In the “Faleză Est” sector, it is being classified six ceramic fragments in the form H 3B (Figure 2/6–8) and seven each in the types H 3C (Figure 2/9–11) and H 3D (Figure 2/12; Figure 3/13–14). All these forms dated to the second half of the 5th century. For the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century, the specific form is H 3E (Figure 3/15–21), with 21 ceramic fragments. The forms from the first half of the 6th century are: H 3F (Figure 3/22-24; Figure 4/25–28) with 22 pottery-shreds, H 3G (Figure 4/29) with two fragments and H 3H (Figure 4/30–33) with 11 ceramic fragments. In the “Faleză Est” sector, a total of 78 ceramic fragments were discovered belonging to the H 3 form.

In the Black Sea basin the H 4 form founds in minimal numbers (Figure 4/34). Its existence has certified in Halmyris and Ibida. In the fortress from Argamum, up to now a single ceramic fragment has discovered in the “Faleză Est” sector. The H 4 plates are framed in the early stages of the Phocaean workshops, dating to the second half of the 4th century.

Another type of bowls rarely found in this geographical region are those specific to form H 5 (Figure 4/35). The four ceramic fragments studied for this article are the only ones of this kind from Argamum, discovered until today, and most probably dated in the second half of the 5th century. Apart from Argamum, other late Roman archaeological sites in Scythia where the presence of the H 5 form reported are Halmyris, Histria or Ibida.

A ceramic fragment it is classified in the form H 8 (Figure 4/36). As well as the forms H 4 and H 5 this type of bowls it is extremely rarely spread in the west-pontic area. Analogies are identified in the fortifications from Histria, Topraichioi, Halmyris or Ibida. The H8 bowls it is dated in the second half of the 5th century and the first half of the 6th century.

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19 TOPOLEANU 2000, 56, Pl. 8/73–74.
20 MOCANU 2014, 157, Fig. 4/31.
21 MOCANU 2018a, 245, Fig. 9/20; TOPOLEANU 2000, 59–60, Pl. 9–10/94–98.
22 SUCEVEANU 1982, 92, no. 24, Fig. 11/24.
23 MOCANU 2014, 158, Fig. 5/32.
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The last and latest form produced in Phocaean workshops, discovered in the “Faleză Est” sector, is H 10. Within the studied ceramic group were identified all three specific variants of this form. Fourteen ceramic fragments are classified as H 10A (Figure 4/37-38; Figure 5/39-40), 12 are H 10B (Figure 5/41-43), and five are H 10C (Figure 5/44-45). The H 10 form is specific to the chronological interval between the second half of the sixth century and the first half of the seventh century. Unlike the H 3 form that is present in all the late Roman fortresses of the western-pontic area, form 10 is found in significant quantities, especially in the settlements on the Black Sea shore-line, the best-known examples being Histria28 or Halmyris29. From H 10 is also found in sites inland the province of Scythia, but in smaller quantities30.

Following the archaeological excavations in the “Faleză Est” sector, six Phocaean ceramic fragments with stamped decoration were unearthed (Figure 5). The decoration can be classified as geometric and vegetal, zoomorphic or paleo-Christian motifs. The geometric and vegetal motifs identified are the lozenge with volutes alternating with the kantharos. These stamps are arranged circularly around the centre of the plate-floor. The stamps are medium in size and with a high degree of usage. In the West-Pontic area, the motif of the kantharos is known on ceramic fragments discovered at Histria31, Tomis32 and Ibida33, and the lozenge with volutes were attested at Halmyris34 and Tomis35. This combination of decorative motifs can be dated back to the second half of the 5th century.

The following stamp shows a decorative motif in the form of “S” with a double outline. Like the previous one and this one is specific to the second half of the 5th century. The analogies known in the western Black Sea come from Ibida36, Halmyris37, Tomis38 and Histria39. The last geometric decorative motif is a double outlined diamond and a stylized cross placed above. In Scythia, it is less known, unlike previous decorative motifs. The only known analogy comes from the ancient archaeological excavations at Histria40. This type of decoration style is specific to the second half of the 5th century. With stamps depicting running rabbits, with their heads turned back are decorated two ceramic fragments. These

28 BĂDESCU, ILIESCU 2016, 148–149, Fig. 8; SUCEVEANU 1982, 99, no. 10–12, Fig. 14/10–12.
29 MOCANU 2018a, 245–246, Fig. 9/23–25, Fig. 10/1–2; TOPOLEANU 2000, 60–62, Pl. 11/99–106.
30 OPIȘ 2003, 152, Pl. 55/364–370; BOGDAN-CĂTĂNICIU, BARNEA 1979, 189, Fig. 167/2.1.
31 POPESCU 1965, 701, Fig. 2/9.
32 PAPUC 1973, 167–168, Fig. 11/1–3.
33 MOCANU 2011A, 296, Fig. 2/4.
35 PAPUC 1963, 160, Fig. 5/1.
36 MOCANU 2011A, 297, Fig. 3/11.
37 TOPOLEANU 1996, 145, no. 7, Pl. 2/7.
38 MUNTEANU, PAPUC 1976, 149, Pl. 1/Fig. 3.
39 POPESCU 1965, 706, Fig. 7/2.
40 POPESCU 1965, Fig. 11/6.
stamps were executed circularly around the centre of the bowl floor. The decorative motif is specific to the second half of the 5th century with useful analogies in Tomis. The only ceramic fragment decorated with paleo Christian motif shows a cross with a double outline. In the centre of the plate floor was executed a large stamp. The way the decoration it is placed, and its dimensions, are specific to the first half of the 6th century. The double outlined cross is a stamp widespread in late Roman settlements on the Black Sea littoral, such as Histria and Tomis, but also appears in settlements from the Lower Danube area, in Noviodunum and Ibida.

Quantitative analysis of the Phocaean tableware group from the “Faleză Est” sector shows that the most common form is H 3F, followed closely by the H 3E form. Other forms with a substantial presence are H 10A and H 10B. At the opposite are the earliest forms, such as H 1B, H1 D or H 4. If we take into account other categories of tableware from “Faleză Est” sector, presented before, we find that the Phocaean ceramics represent 76% of the total, followed by the North African pottery, with 15%, and the light colored Aegean pottery with 5%. At the opposite are the Pontic pottery with 3% and the Cypriot ceramics with only one percentage (Graph 1). Compared with the group of tableware from the “Central Sector”, the percentage ratio between the main workshops is almost similar, with the amendment that in the “Faleză Est” sector, ceramics from the Aegean and Cyprus appear as new.

Graph 1. Percentage ratio of tableware from “Faleză Est” sector

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41 PAPUC 1973, 161, 176, Fig. 8/4, 7.
42 POPESCU 1965, 714, Fig. 13/8.
43 PAPUC 1983, 180, Fig. 24/2.
44 TOPOLEANU 1984, 192, no. 24, Pl. 5/8, Pl. 10/10.
45 MOCANU 2011a, 299, Fig. 4/23–24.
Typo-chronologically (Graph 2), the tableware from the “Faleză Est” sector it is framed as follows: a single ceramic fragment (Cypriot – LRD) it can be dated at the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century. Between the middle of the 4th century and the middle of the 5th century, the quantity of tableware is relatively constant, here framing the early forms imported from North Africa or Phocaea, but also the pottery from the Pontic basin or Aegean. A spectacular increase in the quantity of tableware is present in the middle of the fifth century, thereby the peak being reached in the first quarter of the sixth century. With the middle of the 6th century the quantity of tableware begins to gradually decrease, until its disappearance in the third quarter of the 7th century.

The typo-chronological evolution of the ceramic group from the “Faleză Est” sector highlights the fact that the researches focused on the latest archaeological levels identified in the late Roman fort from Argamum. At the same time, we can say that the existence of this fortification it has extended in the first three-quarters of the seventh century.
Figure 1. Location and plan of Argamum and Faleză-Est sector
Figure 2. H1, H2C
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Figure 3.
Figure 4.
Figure 5.
Selective Catalogue

Form H 1B

   Argamum 1996, FE, C14-15, -1.70 m. Dm: 26; Hp: 3.2.
   Reddish-brown fabric (2.5 YR 4/8), dark reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 3/6). Exterior rim is painted black.

Form H 1D

   Argamum 1981. Dm: undeterminable; Hp: 3.2.
   Reddish-brown fabric (2.5 YR 4/6), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8). On exterior rim, traces of black paint.

Form H 2C

   Argamum 1995, FE, C15, -1.50 m. Dm: undeterminable; Hp: 3.9.
   Orange fabric (2.5 YR 6/8) with fine limestone particles, slip of same shade.

Form H 3A/C

   Reddish-brown fabric (5 YR 4/6), orange slip (5 YR 6/6).

5. Dish. Rim fragment and upper part.
   Dull reddish-brown fabric, reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/6).

Form H 3B

   Argamum 1991, FE, C1/4, -0.85 m. Dm: 32; Hp: 3.6.
   Orange fabric (2.5 YR 6/8), orange slip (5 YR 7/8).

7. Large dish. Rim fragment and upper part.
   Bright brown slip (2.5 YR 5/8), dark reddish-brown slip (5 YR 3/6). Exterior rim has toothed wheel decoration.

8. Large dish. Rim fragment and upper part.
   Argamum 2001, FE, C1, -0.90 m. Dm: 32; Hp: 4.2.
   Reddish-brown fabric (2.5 YR 4/8), bright brown slip (2.5 YR 5/8).
Form H 3C

   Argamum 1979. Dm: 32; Hp: 3.5.
   Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), dark reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 3/4).

    Argamum 1991, FE. C7, -0.85 m. Dm: 30; Hp: 3.1.
    Orange fabric (2.5 YR 6/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8).

    Argamum 2001, FE, C1, -0.70 m. Dm: 31; Hp: 3.5.
    Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8).

Form H 3D

    Argamum 1981. Dm: 30; Hp: 2.9.
    Dull reddish-brown fabric (2.5 YR 4/4) with a large quantity of debris, dark reddish-
    brown slip (2.5 YR 3/6).

    Argamum, FE, passim. Dm: 32; Hp: 2.6.
    Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), orange slip (2.5 YR 6/8). The outer rim is decorated with
    toothed wheel.

    Argamum 2001, FE, C9, -0.70 m. Dm: 29; Hp: 2.1.
    Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/6), dark reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 3/6), with traces of
    black paint on both sides.

Form H 3E

    Argamum 2001, FE, C8, -0.40 m. Dm:23; Hp: 4.5.
    Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8).

    Argamum 1995, FE, C13, -0.90 m. Dm: 29; Hp: 4.4.
    Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8). The exterior rim has
    toothed wheel decoration.

    Argamum 2001, FE, C8, -0.40 m. Dm: 25; Hp: 3.9.
    Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8) with fine particles of limestone, reddish-brown slip (2.5
    YR 4/8).
Argamum, FE, passim. Dm: 28; Hp: 2.2.
Orange fabric (2.5 YR 6/8), bright brown slip (2.5 YR 5/8).
Orange fabric (5 YR 6/8), orange slip (2.5 YR 6/8).
Argamum 2001, FE, C2, -0,94 m. Dm: 26; Hp: 2.5.
Reddish-brown fabric (2.5 YR 4/8) slip of same shade, the outer rim has toothed wheel decoration.
Argamum 2001, FE, C2, -1.00 m. Dm: 22; Hp: 2.8.
Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8).

Form H 3F

22. Dish. Rim fragment and upper part.
Argamum 1991, FE, C2, -0.50 m. Dm: 23; Hp: 2.6.
Dark reddish-brown fabric (5 YR 3/4), brownish-black slip (5 YR 3/1). The exterior rim has toothed wheel decoration.
Argamum 1990, FE. Dm: 26; Hp: 2.8.
Reddish-brown fabric (5 YR 4/6), slip of same shade (5 YR 4/8). The exterior rim is painted black.
Argamum 2001, FE, C8, -0,40 m. Dm: 23; Hp: 2.5.
Orange fabric (2.5 YR 6/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8).
Argamum 1990, FE. Dm: 28; Hp: 2.7.
Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8). The exterior rim is painted white and toothed wheel decorated.
27. Dish. Rim fragment and upper part.
Argamum, FE, passim. Dm: undeterminable; Hp: 3.3.
Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8). The exterior rim is painted black.
   Argamum 1995, FE, C14, -1.35 m. Dm: undeterminable; Hp: 2.4.
   Reddish-brown fabric (2.5 YR 4/8), slip of same shade.

Form H 3G

29. Large size dish. Missing floor.
   Argamum 1995, FE, C4, -0.70 m. Dm: 32; Hp: 5.2.
   Reddish-brown fabric (2.5 YR 4/6), dark reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 3/6). The exterior rim is painted black.

Form H 3H

   Argamum 1995, FE, C15, -1.50 m. Dm: 25; Hp: 3.4.
   Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8) with some fine particles of limestone, reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8). The outer rim is painted black.

   Argamum 2001, FE, C1, -1.30. Dm: 15; Hp: 3.7.

32. Dish. Rim fragment and upper part.
   Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), slip of same shade.

33. Dish. Rim fragment and upper part.
   Argamum 1995, FE, C8; -1.15 m. Dm: undeterminable. Hp: 2.
   Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8).

Form H 4

34. Plate. Rim fragment and upper part.
   Argamum 1990, FE, -0.60 m. Dm: 30; Hp: 2.3.
   Greyish-brown fabric (5 YR 4/2), dull reddish-brown slip (5 YR 4/4). The exterior rim is painted black.

Form H 5

35. Medium size bowl. Missing flor.
   Argamum 2001, FE, C8, -0.40 m. Dm: 22; Hp: 4.
   Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8).

Form H 8

   Argamum 1984, FE. Dm: 18; Hp: 3.8.
Form H 10A

Argamum 1991, FE, C10, -0.60 m. Dm: 30; Hp: 5.
Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8). The outer rim is painted white.

38. Dish. Rim and upper body.
Argamum 1996, FE, C14. Dm: 30; Hp: 3.4
Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8); reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8)

Argamum 2001, FE, C7, -0.45. Dm: undeterminable; Hp: 2.7.
Reddish-brown fabric (2.5 YR 4/6), dark reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 3/6). The exterior rim is painted in black and white.

40. Dish. Rim fragment and upper wall.
Argamum, FE, passim. Dm: undeterminable; Hp: 3.
Bright reddish-brown fabric (5 YR 5/6), reddish-brown slip (5 YR 4/8).

Form H 10B

41. Dish. Rim fragment and upper wall.
Argamum 1987, FE, passim. Dm: 25; Hp: 3.5.
Orange fabric (5 YR 6/8) with some small limestone particles, reddish-brown slip (5 YR 4/8).

42. Dish. Rim fragment and upper wall.
Argamum, FE, passim. Dm: 30; Hp: 4.5.

43. Dish. Rim fragment and upper wall.
Argamum 2001, FE, C1, -0.80 m. Dm: 24; Hp: 2.9.
Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8).

Form H 10C

44. Dish. Rim fragment and upper wall.
Argamum 1987, FE, passim. Dm: 22; Hp: 3.3.
Orange fabric (5 YR 6/8), bright brown slip (5 YR 5/8).

45. Dish. Rim fragment and upper wall.
Argamum 1987, FE, passim. Dm: 26; Hp: 2.4.
Bright brown fabric (2.5 YR 5/8), reddish-brown slip (2.5 YR 4/8).
References


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