

ROMAN POTTERY AND TRADE NETWORKS
SOME NOTES ON ITALIAN SIGILLATA IN THE LOWER DANUBE
AND IN THE NORTH-WESTERN BLACK SEA

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1. Introduction

In Roman times, the Mediterranean Sea was the crossroads of traffics, trades and communications connecting the areas on its opposite shores¹; the Black Sea, despite its side position, was held in a similar consideration², and both seas were already interconnected in Greek times and became part of the Roman trade system. Since Hellenistic times, with a growth in the Imperial period, the region increased her links with the wider Roman trade network; these connections have often been studied in relation to transport amphorae, which are a clear – and traditional – indicator of trade. Besides amphorae, one of the most traded pottery groups is that of fine wares, namely terra sigillata³. This class can be taken as a superb example of the interconnectivity of the Roman world: its manufacture rose in the East and came to influence the rising Italian production, which was firstly exported in the provinces and later influenced the rising of different regional productions, among which we can recall – regarding our study – Pontic sigillata⁴. In this study we will try to understand the nature and entity of these connections through the study of the trade of Italian sigillata in the Black Sea region, focusing on the provenance of the products and trade directories and consumption patterns. This will help to understand some dynamics of trade contact and goods distribution and

¹ This topic was discussed in the annual Symposia on Mediterranean Archaeology.

² GHERVAS 2018.

³ ETTLINGER 1987; ZABEHLICKY-SCHEFFENEGGER 1982.

⁴ POBLOME – BRULET – BOUNEGRU 2000.

particularly the topic of trade connections between Italy and the Black Sea region during the early Roman Empire.

Up to now, the presence of Italian – or western – imported fine wares in the Black Sea region has been studied at regional or provincial scale, but no general attempt has been done to consider the presence of Italian fine wares in the Black Sea as a whole⁵. Unfortunately, providing a full-scale, detailed bibliographical survey of the finds along the whole sea coast and interior is far beyond the possibilities and the limits and the possibilities of this study; it has been considered more practical to propose an updated synthesis on a more limited area, with a proper contextualisation of the finds. The selected area for this study has been identified with the left Pontus – the north – western coast of the Black Sea, covering the area from the Bosphorus straits to the Caucasian region. The area involves two different provinces (Thracia and Moesia Inferior), territories of the barbaricum and, in the northern Black Sea, the Greek cities of the region and the Kingdom of Bosphorus.

1.1 Current research

The presence of Italian terra sigillata in the Black Sea region has initially been considered marginal or ignored by western and local literature. As a significant example of this neglect, we can point out to the distribution maps proposed in some of the most important general works about Italian terra sigillata. In the *Atlante delle forme Ceramiche*, Pucci mentions only finds from the fort of Novae, on the Danube river⁶; even more recently, the *Corpus Vasorum Arretinorum*, reports only Novae and Olbia Pontica as the sole findspots of Italian stamped sigillata⁷; finally, the *Conspectus* too reports only the fort of Novae as the sole findspot in the north-

⁵ When referring to terra sigillata, “Italian” is used in a broader sense, comprising both the peninsular (terra sigillata aretina and italica) and the Po valley (terra sigillata nord-italica or padana) productions together with their later developments.

⁶ PUCCI 1985.

⁷ OXE – COMFORT – KENDRICK 2000, p. 40, fig. 4.

western Black Sea. Initially, this situation was surely influenced by both the state of local studies and – more important – by the lack or difficulties in scientific communication between the two sides of the Iron Curtain⁸. In the more recent studies, the lack of updates is more difficult to explain or justify, as more material was being published even in international journals, such as the *Rei Cretariae Fautorum Acta*⁹.

When tracing a research history about the presence of Italian sigillata in the study area, all the regions start from a similar premise. In the '60s, Italian imports were known, but considered scarce or rare: Rutkowsky, one of the first authors to consider this problem in Bulgaria, considers them extremely rare in the lower Danube region¹⁰; in the northern Pontic area the presence of this class was known since the '20s¹¹, but when, in later years, a general catalogue of Roman imports – of every kind – was prepared, Italian sigillata was still considered as an extremely rare import, almost absent in the area except for Olbia¹². Studies of old finds or museum collections and the renewal of scientific contacts have proven of great help in dealing with this subject, but one of the most determining factors was the opening of new excavations or the reprise of interrupted investigations. Among them, in the northern Pontic region, one of the most influential was the study by Belov about the sigillata from Chersonesos, which – despite its brevity and the limited number of discussed finds – highlighted the presence of imported sigillata from Italy, Gaul and central Europe in Chersonesos, questioning about their possible origin¹³. Thanks to these efforts, between the '90s and the 2000's, some of the first regional-based synthesis studies appeared, covering the areas of Moesia Superior¹⁴, Moesia Inferior¹⁵,

⁸ DOONAN 2009.

⁹ *E.g.*, the stamps from Moesia Inferior published in DIMITROVA MILCEVA 1992 are omitted in OCK 2000.

¹⁰ RUTKOWSKY 1963-1964.

¹¹ KNIPOVICH 1929; KNIPOVICH 1952.

¹² KROPOTKIN 1970; see also ZHURALVEV 2008, p. 94.

¹³ BELOV 1967.

¹⁴ BJELAJAC 1990.

Dacia¹⁶ and the northern Pontus¹⁷. These studies offer good regional outlines, but by doing so, provide only a limited view of the subject, often lacking confrontation with close areas. Finally, in the last decade, new studies and updates depended on data from recently excavations, mostly from Moesia Inferior¹⁸.

2. Procedure

Studies on the distribution of any kind of material can't avoid some basic, preliminary steps:

- a survey of published literature, aimed at gathering a bulk of data
- the compilation of a catalogue of findspots and stamps useful for the preparation of a distribution map

These data will be used to discuss some topics:

- the regional provenance of the imported sigillata
- the recognition of eventual transformations in trade trends over time
- trade directories and patterns of import and consumption

Obviously, sigillata was not the only import from Italy in the region, and a distribution map, even if comprising river, ports and roads, can't be the final point in a study about complex trade networks. To reach a better comprehension of the subject, it may be interesting to try – at least in a selected area – a comparison between the distribution of sigillata and other Italian imports. The choice fell on the imports of amphorae in the provinces of Moesia and Moesia Inferior, which were the subject of a recent and exhaustive study¹⁹.

¹⁵ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 1992; DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000.

¹⁶ RUSU-BOLINET 2004.

¹⁷ ZHURALVEV 2003; ZHURALVEV 2008.

¹⁸ Most of them are summarized in KABAKCHIEVA 2016.

¹⁹ DOBREVA 2017.

The comparison with this class makes some question arise:

- are amphorae and sigillata found in the same sites?
- is it possible to recognise similar (or slightly different) distribution patterns?
- is it possible to recognise different patterns of consumption for these products?

3. The north-western Black Sea: provinces, forts, barbarians and Client Kingdoms

Dealing with the north-western coast of the Black Sea means dealing with a vast region. Surely, for our purpose, the study of the sole coastal area does not allow a full discussion of the subject nor allows to include the data of the mainland, slightly more consistent than those of the coast. It has thus been decided to consider the area of the whole provinces of Thracia, Moesia Inferior, *barbaricum* east of the Carpathians, the Greek city-states of the northern coastland and the Pontic kingdom.

3.1 Historic context

This study covers a vast area, which in Roman Times was not united under the same polity and the same administration. Although it is not possible to provide a full summary on the history and organisation of these realities, it is useful to remind that during the 1st and 2nd century AD, the studied area was divided in different provinces: Thracia and Moesia Inferior became part of the Empire in different times and different ways.

The first contacts with the Roman state date to the 2nd century BC.

Although the date of its precise creation is still debated, Moesia was certainly established as a province in 15 AD²⁰; some of the earliest phases of its evolution are still unclear, but it is certain that

²⁰ Tac., *Ann.* I, 80.

45 AD marked an expansive moment as the territory between the Danube and the Black sea was added to the province. In 86 or 89 AD, during a war against Dacians, Moesia was split in Moesia Superior and Moesia Inferior by Domitian. During the 1st century AD, the troops stationed in Moesia Inferior were between two and four legions plus auxiliary units stationing in many military camps. Frequently, the presence of military camps brought to the rise of nearby civil settlements, the *canabae* or were built near previous Thracian villages; in some cases, these settlements transformed into significant cities²¹.

Thracia was added to the Empire in 45 A.D.: the Thracian kingdom had preserved its independence thanks to a long-lasting alliance with the Romans, but in the end was absorbed as a province after a period of civil wars opposing the local dynasty and the fully Romanised local aristocracy.

Part of the territories outside of the Empire were to be considered *barbaricum*, although the Roman state maintained military units in some of the ancient Greek colonies along the coast, formally united to the Moesian province²²; finally, part of Crimea and the Taman peninsula were the seat of the client kingdom of Bosphorus. All these entities and regions had different backgrounds, different settlement structures and different economies. Providing a full and complete analysis and comparison of them all is by far beyond the limits and spaces of this paper, but these factors must always be considered.

4. The finds

In this section, the finds from the studied area will be presented and discussed. A summary of stamps and shapes will be provided. Firstly, a list of findspots will be presented and discussed. This will be followed by a detailed overview of forms and stamps.

²¹ IVANOV 2004.

²² SARNOWSKI 2017.

4.1 Findspots

4.1.1 Thracia

Finds of Italian sigillata in Thracia are quite scarce (Fig. 1). In recent years, some fragments from Serdica (present-day Sofia) have been published. They consist of cups of Conspectus 20 and 34 types²³. Two of them have planta pedis stamps by Cornelius (CORNE) and Clemens (P.L.CLE); both these producers were active in Arezzo during the first half of the 1st century AD²⁴.

In her recent overview of Bulgarian finds of imported sigillata, Gergana Kabakchieva lists recent finds of plain sigillata from other Thracian cities such as Pautalia, Diocletianopolis, Beroe – Augusta Traiana, Mesambria and Deultum, unfortunately without discussing them or providing literature nor mentioning their eventual Italian origin²⁵. However, even if this data will deserve and need further investigation, it is quite significant for the understanding of trade networks.

4.1.2 Moesia Inferior

Moesia Inferior is – among the studied areas – the richest in Italian sigillata (Fig. 1). This circumstance depends on two circumstances – which will be properly discussed later: the waterway of the Danube river and the presence of many excavated forts and civil settlements.

Ratiaria

Ratiaria was created as a military post for vexillationes from Legio IIII Flavia and Legio VII Claudia; the area was transferred to the Provincia Moesia Superior in 86 AD and was re-founded as Colonia Ulpia Traiana Ratiaria after the Dacian wars²⁶. Few fragments of

²³ IVANOV 2013.

²⁴ OCK 2000, 1008 (P.L.Clemens), 611,7 (Cornelius).

²⁵ KABAKCHIEVA 2016, fig. 1.

²⁶ DINCHEV 2015.

Italian sigillata from Ratiaria have been published up to now. Two Consp. 20, both with stamps by Gellius, and a cup of Consp. 23 or 49 type²⁷.

Conbustica

Conbustica was a road station and military camp along the way between Naissus and Ratiaria, also appearing on the Tabula Peutingeriana. In Conbustica, plates Consp. 19, 20, 21 and a Consp. 34 cup were found²⁸.

Almus

Almus was a roman fort on the Danube. A plate of Consp. 3 and a Consp. 34/37 cup stamped by M. Perennius Crescens were found in Almus²⁹.

Montana

Montana was a fortified settlement and city in the interior of Moesia, along the river Augusta, which flowed in the Danube at Augustae³⁰. Three specimens from Montana were known, belonging to the forms Consp. 20 (stamped GELLI), 33 and 34³¹. New excavations in Montana provided new data on Italian sigillata: more Consp. 20 plates, but also new shapes, as Consp. 21, 26 and 27³².

²⁷ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000, cat. 21, 90; KABAKCHIEVA 2016, p. 595.

²⁸ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000.

²⁹ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000, cat. 38, 60.

³⁰ IVANOV – LUKA 2016.

³¹ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000, cat. 19, 76 and 35.

³² KABAKCHIEVA 2016, pp. 595-596.

Augustae

In Augustae, five Italian vessels were found. They are almost all plates of Consp. 3, 20 and 21 type, with a single Consp. 33 cup; one out of two Consp. 20 plates is stamped LGELL³³.

Oescus

Oescus was created in the late Augustan period as camp of the Legio V Macedonica. After the Dacian wars was refounded as Colonia Ulpia Oescensium in 106 AD, becoming one of the major cities in Moesia Inferior. Excavations in Oescus have provided 16 specimens of Italian sigillata: the represented forms are Conspectus 1, 4, 18, 21, 22, 34. Four stamps were found: three from Gellius and one from Felicio³⁴. Oescus has provided the only known specimen of Italian relief sigillata in the area, a Drag. 29 bowl attributed to L. Rasinus Pisanus, active between the reigns of Domitian and Trajan³⁵. New excavations provided finds of new shapes, as Consp. 29 and 37 and new finds of already known shapes as Consp. 19, 20, 21 and 34; also new specimens by Gellius were found. The newly documented forms Consp. 39, 43 and 44 are from the Late Italian production and are dated to the Flavian period; a Consp. 43 cup was marked by Sextus Murrius Pisanus³⁶.

Smocan

The settlement of Melta originated in Thracian times, and subsequently a Roman fort was built in the area. The terra sigillata finds come from the local Thracio-Roman necropolis³⁷, and consist of a Consp. 21 plate and Consp. 23 and 33 cups³⁸.

³³ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000, cat. 25, 33, 42, 59, 63.

³⁴ KABAKCHIEVA 2000, pp. 53-55, pl. VIII-IX.

³⁵ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000, p. 14.

³⁶ KABAKCHIEVA 2016, p. 597, fig. 3.

³⁷ KITOV – PAVLOV 1985.

³⁸ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000, cat. 61, 68, 91.

Dimum

Dimum was an important centre situated on the right side of the Danubius, between Oescus and Novae. It was part of a network of castles and fortifications for the control of the area which acquired new importance during the Dacian campaigns by Trajan; the Tabula Peutingeriana also locates there the Statio Dimensis, and an inscription mentions both Statio Dimensis and an imperial commercial fleet. The archaeological site is composed by a recently investigated *castellum* and – outside its walls – a monumental building, possibly an horreum, and a necropolis³⁹. In the necropolis, a Consp. 34 cup stamped GELI and a fragmentary plate marked GEL[---] were found⁴⁰. Recent excavations in the castle of Dimum, - in use between the half of the 1st century AD and Hadrianic times – have provided new finds of imported Italian sigillata; the forms are Consp. 20 and 34⁴¹.

Novae

Novae is by far one of the sites richest in Italian imports. The military camp has been excavated since the '60s; it was established in 45 AD as garrison of legion VIII Augusta and later, after 69 AD, of the I Italica⁴². Most of the finds of Italian sigillata from old excavations come from the *scamnum tribunorum* or from the barracks. The assemblage from the old excavations is composed by 62 specimens of Consp. 3, 4, 20, 21, 34, 34/37 and 44 type, produced in workshops from Arezzo and Northern Italy⁴³. Excavations in Novae were resumed in 2011⁴⁴. Sigillata from recent excavations in the legionary barracks of Sector XII was studied and published by

³⁹ MITOVA DZHONOVA 2003.

⁴⁰ MITOVA DZHONOVA 1994, Abb. 6, 1-2.

⁴¹ KABAKCHIEVA, LAZAROVA 2012, pp. 11-17; KABACHIEVA 2016, p. 597.

⁴² CIOLER – DYCZEK 2011, pp. 9-10.

⁴³ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000, pp. 43-49.

⁴⁴ DYCZEK 2015.

Piotr Dyceck⁴⁵. Two phases were distinguished by the change in the stationing legion: the VIII Augusta between 45 and 69 AD and, from 69 onwards, the I Italica. In the first phase, 30 fragments of Italian, Gaulish and Eastern Sigillata B were found; the only remarkable specimen of Italian production is a fragment marked GE [---]OF, from the workshop of Gellius. In the second phase, finds are more abundant; the forms *Conspectus* 20, 20-21, 34, 39, 43 and possibly 51⁴⁶ are present. Two of them are stamped: a *Consp.* 20 plate (C[---]V), a *Consp.* 34 cup with the stamp CTSVC and a *Consp.* 43 cup marked QLC. This evidence allowed the author to observe some features of the assemblage:

- it was composed by simple types, with no special forms
- it was based on a repetitive set of plate, bowl and beaker
- it was composed of Italian, Gaulish and Eastern sigillata B, with a prominence of Italian pottery (54%). This was due to the already established trade connections with Italy along the Danube river for the supplying of other forts, which made more practical enlarge them rather than establishing new trade connections with eastern production centres.
- Supplies were well organised, as new forms were present just after starting being produced

Sexaginta Prista

Sexaginta Prista was one of the most important settlements on the Danube, firstly built as a naval base and later protected with a fort. Despite the importance of the site⁴⁷, it has provided few useful finds for this study: fragments of Italian sigillata have been found in Sexaginta Prista, but apparently none of them of recognisable type⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ DYCZEK 2018.

⁴⁶ The attribution of the specimen to an Italian production is uncertain.

⁴⁷ VARBANOV – DRAGOEV 2007.

⁴⁸ KAMISHEVA 2012.

Cursium

Cursium was a fort established during the 1st century AD in the lower course of the Danube. Few finds of terra sigillata from this site have been recently published: they consist of a Consp. 34⁴⁹ and a 39 cup, plus some other sherds⁵⁰.

Noviodunum

Noviodunum was an important port in the lower course of the Danube and the seat of the Classis Flavia Moesica. Few fragments of Italian sigillata were found in Noviodunum. In the area of the large tower were found a Consp. 14 bowl, a Consp. 18 plate and a Consp. 23 and 49 cups⁵¹.

In Moesia Inferior, the most important trade directory was the river Danube, as most of the finds come from sites located along its course. As goods were carried by water, one may expect to find larger assemblages in sites with river ports. According to current research, instead, it seems that typology and dimension of settlement do not have an influence on the number and nature of the finds. As many of the new excavations have provided new data and added new findspots, it is rather more likely that the state and advance of research is a very influential aspect. Imported vessels were also traded in the interior, as suggest the finds from Conbustica and Melta: significantly, some of the findspot are along the course of tributaries of the Danube.

⁴⁹ MOCANU 2016, cat. 2.

⁵⁰ HONCU – CHIRAC 2015, cat. 2.

⁵¹ BAUMANN 2008, cat. 1-4.

4.1.3 Geto – Dacian territory

Two Italian sigillata fragments are recorded east of the Carpathians mountains, from the settlements of Brad and Cernat (Fig. 1). They are respectively a Consp. 18.2 plate and a Consp. 52 chalice which preserve only a human leg as the sole part of its relief decoration⁵².

4.1.4 Northern Pontic Region

Tyras

Tyras was founded by Milesian colonists in the 6th century BC. During the 1st century AD the city was refounded after a barbarian sack and united to Moesia Inferior. Italian imports in Tyras are the subject of a recent study⁵³. The presence of amphorae, coins, lamps and glasses in the city was connected to a possible presence of the Roman army. Few small fragments of imported sigillata were found: they are all decorated by relief vegetal patterns, but – according to the author, it is impossible to discern if they are of Italian or Gaulish origin.

Olbia

Olbia was founded by Milesian colonists in the 7th century BC to serve as a commercial emporium in the northern Black Sea. The city's history in Roman times is similar to Tyras', as it was refounded and united to Moesia Inferior. In the early 20th century, excavations in Olbia were firstly promoted by Farmakowsky, who recovered many fragments of Italian sigillata. According to current research, Olbia is the richest site of the area for Italian sigillata finds. Stamps from the city number up to thirteen, from Arezzo, Pozzuoli and central Italy. Two fragments of Italian relief sigillata were found in Olbia: the first one depicts part of a horse⁵⁴ and the second a

⁵² POPESCU 2010, pp. 78-79, cat. 527-528.

⁵³ SAVELYEV 2017.

⁵⁴ ZHURALVEV 2008, fig. 5, 4.

hunting lion⁵⁵; a third relief fragment was found in Zolotaya Balka⁵⁶.

Chersonesos

The city of Chersonesos is the second richest site for sigillata finds. It has provided a comparatively large number of finds of relief sigillata from Italy and Gaul; they mostly consist of decorated sherds⁵⁷ but the most significant specimen is a krater with vegetal decoration, attributed to a central Italian production⁵⁸. Two stamps have been found in the city, that of Pompeius Serenus and one with the initials L.T.I.⁵⁹.

The role of the city in the trade of Roman and Italian goods is remarkable: it acted as a redistribution centre, mediating between the Roman world and the late Scythians living in the area, as suggested by the finds of the necropolis near the Al'ma and Belbek rivers.

Belbek IV

In early Imperial period, south-western Crimea was a region where many political entities – the Bosporan kingdom, the city of Chersonesos, the Scythian and Sarmatian peoples and the Roman Empire were present. Even if they may had opposing interests, trade among them was active, and Roman goods were often found in barbarian sites. Among the most significant archaeological investigations concerning our topic, we can mention the excavations of the late Scythian period in the valleys of the Al'ma and Belbek rivers; the only site to have provided Italian imports is Belbek IV, a necropolis in use between the 1st and 3rd century AD. In one of the graves, a Consp. 23 bowl stamped ATEI was found⁶⁰. The grave is dated to the 3rd quarter of the 1st century AD, which responds to the time chronology of the cup.

⁵⁵ ZHURALVEV 2008, fig. 4, 11.

⁵⁶ VYAZ'MITINA 1962, fig. 85,1.

⁵⁷ ZHURALVEV 2008, pp. 107 – 108.

⁵⁸ BELOV 1967.

⁵⁹ ZHURALVEV 2008, p. 108.

⁶⁰ ZHURALVEV 2000, p. 151, fig. 2, 1.

Bosporan Kingdom

In Roman times, the client kingdom of Bosphorus controlled the Taman peninsula up to the city of Tanais and south-eastern Crimea. May of its cities have provided finds of Italian sigillata, but always in small quantities; it can be discerned that this class was traded in the region but with an extremely low incidence (Fig. 2). The increment in the known findspots and specimens due to recent research developments may suggest that further research could provide more available data but a radical change of this general frame is quite unlikely.

In Panticapaeum, cups stamped by C. Murius and Memmius were found. A Consp. 6 or 21 plate stamped Gelli was found in Gorgippia.

Italian sigillata is also present in small quantities in some sites and cities of the region. In most cases, these data consist of few sherds and mentions of unpublished finds but reporting them – although providing no other data apart from a “dot on the map” can be quite significant to reconstruct the actual diffusion of the class.

A fragment of krater with relief decoration depicting a procession, attributed to a central Italian workshop, was found in the sanctuary of Gurzufskoe⁶¹, and two fragments of Italian sigillata were found in Nymphaion⁶². Finally, in his bibliographic survey of western sigillata, Zhuralvev reports two pieces of information by K. Domzalski, which reported the presence of Italian sigillata in Myrmekion⁶³ and Tanais⁶⁴.

4.2 Stamps

The study of terra sigillata stamps is of fundamental importance for the understanding of many aspects of production and chronology. Here a short overview of all stamps from the studied area is proposed. This is not just a summary of published data, but also an

⁶¹ NOVICHENKOVA 2002, p. 125.

⁶² DOMZALSKI 1996, p. 99, fig. 1, 20-21.

⁶³ ZHURALVEV 2008, p. 109.

⁶⁴ ZHURALVEV 2008, p. 110.

update of some data which are not fully described in literature⁶⁵ (table 1).

Even at first glance, it is possible to recognise two different situations, distinguished on a geographical, political and economic basis. Along the Danube river, the products of Gellius are markedly prominent and constitute most of the imports: out of 25 readable stamps, 15 are of Gellius. This is due to the enormous output of Gellius, which was by far one of the most successful sigillata producers⁶⁶. The *Corpus Vasorum Arretinorum* provides a detailed distribution map for his products⁶⁷ (Fig. 3); although it lacks most of the data about the study area, it clearly shows the trade directory followed by these vessels. Huge concentrations in Aquileia and along the Sava river suggest that they were shipped from Aquileia through Nauportus and subsequently distributed in military posts along the Danube waterway. The original map lacks most of the Moesian finds, but in fact they are quite abundant. Gellius certainly enjoyed a significant role in that trade, but surely was not the only involved producer. Other stamps from the region point to the presence of products from Arezzo, Pozzuoli and the Po valley. It is worth to mention that despite Po valley workshops count only three stamps, their products seem to be more common than those from Arezzo in the overall finds count from Moesia⁶⁸; the circulation of their products could have been eased by the presence of a direct waterway. The dynamics and exact nature (free or state-controlled?) of the trade directed towards military castra along the *limes* are not completely clear, but it is likely that the state was at least partly involved⁶⁹.

⁶⁵ E.g., ZHURALVEV 2008 presents many stamped specimens from Olbia, but only a part of them is discussed in the text.

⁶⁶ ZABEHLICKY-SCHEFFENEGGER 1982; OCK 2000.

⁶⁷ OCK 2000, p. 49, fig. 11.

⁶⁸ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000, tab. 2.

⁶⁹ MENCHELLI 1997.

In the northern Pontic region, the situation is completely different. Out of 23 stamps, only four are related to the workshop of Gellius. The stamps indicate that imports originated from different areas of Thyrranian Italy: Arezzo, Pisa, Siena and Pozzuoli, plus some other stamps of unknown provenance. No northern Italian producer is known in the region. The contemporary presence of pottery from different producers and different origins suggests that the Eastern markets were reached by different commercial directories from the Thyrranian coast of Italy. However, it is quite unlikely that direct Italian – Bosporan trade relations existed: in the case of Chersonesos, a detailed study of the city's trade connections concluded that the major commercial partners were the cities on the southern coast of the Pontus, as Heraclea and Sinope⁷⁰. These cities were possibly the ports where the transfer of cargo took place or were just receiving goods from other intermediaries in the eastern Mediterranean⁷¹. The circumstance that vessels produced in different manufacture centres are found in almost equivalent quantities is the consequence of the intermediation provided by the Asian cities.

4.3 Forms and types

Besides stamps, another topic deserving proper investigation is the presence of forms. Of course, due to the differences in local and regional research advances, site typology, historical background and trade networks in Roman times, trying any numeric or direct comparison between the known specimens and forms seemed improper. Despite this limit, it is certainly worth to question if there were widespread shapes, or if there were significant differences or trends in the diffusion of forms and types. Some forms were undoubtedly more recurrent than others, but many sites have provided a limited assemblage of Italian vessels to evaluate. Consp. 19, 20 and 21 are the most common plate types in the Danube area, as well as 23 and 34 for cups. Besides these ones, some forms are known in few specimens or sites; despite the partiality of data, the

⁷⁰ KADEEV – SOROCHAN 1989.

⁷¹ ARCHER 2006.

Danube area has provided a wider array of forms. In Novae, the presence of a set made of plate, bowl and beaker was suggested by the recurrence of some shapes⁷². In the northern Pontus, the most common forms are Consp. 4, 6, 13, 14, 18, 22, 23 and 34⁷³.

It is evident that in the two areas different types were circulating. The Danube area had a more complete array of forms; this depends from the region's direct links with Italy and by the major incidence of the presence of the class. Current research does not allow to properly explain the differences in the trade of forms between the two regions. It is also significant to point out that the forms typical of the late Italian production – as Consp. 39, 43, 44 – are completely absent from the northern Black Sea. The only specimens of this period to reach the region are the relief sigillata ones.

Conspectus	Shape	Chronology	Moesia / Thracia	Northern Pontus
1	Plate	40-15 BC	X	
3	Plate	Before 50 AD	X	
4	Plate	Augustan - Claudian	X	X
6	Plate	Augustan - 50 AD		X
13	Bowl	Middle Augustan		X
14	Bowl	Middle/late Augustan	X	X
18	Plate	Augustan - Tiberian	X	X
19	Plate	Augustan - Tiberian	X	
20	Plate	Augustan -	X	

⁷² DYCZEK 2018.

⁷³ ZHURALVEV 2008; this note is provided as a whole survey of forms, which are not discussed in the single sites.

		Neronian		
21	Plate	Augustan - Tiberian	X	
22	Cup	Augustan - Tiberian	X	X
23	Cup	25-75 AD	X	X
26	Cup	0-50 AD	X	
27	Cup	Tiberian - Neronian	X	
33	Cup	Tiberian - after 50 AD	X	
34	Cup	Tiberian - Flavian	X	X
39	Bowl	50-150 AD	X	
43	Cup	50-150 AD	X	
44	Cup	Flavian - 150 AD	X	
49	Cup	50-150 AD	X	
51	Jar	Augustan - Flavian	X	
52	Chalice	Late Italian		X

4.4 Relief sigillata

Terra sigillata with relief decoration is a group which is present in relatively small numbers but providing interesting hints for the study of trade dynamics in the region. Finds of relief sigillata are extremely rare along the Danube (Fig. 4). A single fragment of relief sigillata was found in Oescus: it is the rim of a Drag. 29 – like bowl whose decorative pattern is closely comparable to Rasinus Pisanus' ones⁷⁴. Outside of the Empire, a fragment of relief sigillata was found in the Geto-Dacian settlement of Cernat: it is part of a Consp. 52 chalice,

⁷⁴ DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000, p. 14, cat. 156.

preserving only a leg from a human figure⁷⁵. Instead, such finds are far more abundant in the northern Pontic region: relief-decorated materials have been found in Tyras, Olbia, Chersonesos and Gurzufskoe.

In Tyras, two small wall fragments of relief sigillata were found. One has a decoration of flowers and rosettes, one of flutes and rosettes⁷⁶. Their editor attributes them to Italian or Gaulish workshops; in fact, the decorative patterns could be compatible with Italian production, but the fragments are too small and the decoration preserved too generic to discern that with total security. Two fragments have been found in Olbia: the lower part of a bowl with the depiction of a horse and part of a bowl with a hunting lion⁷⁷. Chersonesos has provided a quite consistent group of finds: two rim and two wall fragments were recovered; one of them is possibly

5. Comparing Italian imports: sigillata and amphorae in Thracia and Moesia Inferior

In order to have a better understanding of regional trade networks, a comparison was tried between the data about distribution of sigillata and Italian amphorae. The aim of this attempt is trying to define if Italian products were traded along the same ways and networks, or if their eventually different distribution patterns could point to the existence of different connections. In recent years, D. Dobрева realised a comprehensive study of amphorae from Thracia and Moesia inferior; all data about distribution and presences of Italian amphora types used in this study were derived from her work⁷⁸. These data were used to arrange a distribution map of Italian amphorae in Thracia and Moesia Inferior and to propose some observations.

⁷⁵ POPESCU 2010, pp. 78-79, cat. 528.

⁷⁶ SAVELIEV 2017, p. 120, fig. 1, 2-3.

⁷⁷ ZHURALVEV 2008, fig. 4, 11; fig. 5, 4.

⁷⁸ DOBREVA 2017, pp. 291-302.

5.1 Italian amphorae in Thracia and Moesia Inferior

It must be firstly acknowledged that Italian amphorae, although reaching the Black Sea and lower Danube regions, are quite scarce in numbers and represent a small percentage of the regional trade. Only five types are known: Dressel 6A and 6B, Dressel 2/4, Schörgendorfer 558 and the flat-bottomed amphorae. Here a small synthesis on these finds is reported⁷⁹.

3.1.1 Wine amphorae

- Dressel 2/4 amphorae were used for the transport of wine: they were one of the most diffused types in Roman Italy between the mid 1st century BC and the 2nd century AD. The most important productive areas were the Campanian and Thyrrhenian coast, but regional productions are also known in the Adriatic coast and in the Po valley. In the Black sea, e different productions – distinguished in most western studies – are all defined through a single type, making difficult to evaluate the provenance areas⁸⁰. Dressel 2/4 amphorae have been found in Aegyssus⁸¹, Novae⁸², Sexaginta Prista⁸³ and Diana⁸⁴.

- Dressel 6A amphorae were produced in the Po valley and in the western Adriatic coast between the late 1st century BC and the 1st AD and were used for the transport of wine. Two specimens are known, from Dimum⁸⁵ and Novae⁸⁶.

⁷⁹ For a full discussion and literature on these types, DOBREVA 2017.

⁸⁰ DOBREVA 2017, p. 295.

⁸¹ OPAIT 1987, pp. 148-9, 154-5, fig. 3, 4-7; on the context, DOBREVA 2017, pp. 152-4, context A20.

⁸² DOBREVA 2017, p. 59, 295 and DYCZEK 1997, mentioning a Dressel 2-4 of Campanian production.

⁸³ DOBREVA 2017, p. 72.

⁸⁴ BJELALAC 1996, p. 28, sl. 5, 36.

⁸⁵ MITOVA DZONOVA 1994, p. 63, n. 12, fig. 7,2.

⁸⁶ DYCZEK 1991, p. 110, pl. XI, 1.

- Flat-bottomed amphorae were produced along the Adriatic coast, from Aemilia to Picenum, between the mid-first and mid-third century AD. They have been found in Novae⁸⁷, Troesmis⁸⁸, Sexaginta Prista⁸⁹ and possibly in Chitashkata Mogila⁹⁰. The type is also present beyond the Danube, in Tibiscum, Romula and Pojejena⁹¹.

5.1.2 Oil amphorae

- Dressel 6B amphorae were produced in the Adriatic region between the late first century BC and the second century AD. Productive centres have been excavated in Istria, in Loron and Fasana and these amphorae were also produced in the Po plain. This type is reported in *Oescus*⁹², *Novae*⁹³, and possibly in Nicopolis⁹⁴. Other finds are reported in Moesia Superior, from *Singidunum* and *Viminacium*⁹⁵, and in Dacia⁹⁶.

5.1.3 Olive amphorae

- The type is well documented in the area: some fragments were found in Thrace, in the villa of Ivaylovgrad⁹⁷; in Moesia Inferior olive amphorae are reported in Sexaginta Prista⁹⁸ and Ratiaria⁹⁹. The

⁸⁷ DYCZEK 1996, p. 32.

⁸⁸ OPAIT 1980, p. 304, type VII, pl. VIII, 1.

⁸⁹ DOBREVA 2017, p. 77.

⁹⁰ DOBREVA 2017, pp. 164-65, context A33.

⁹¹ ARDET 2000, p. 489, fig. 2, 4-6.

⁹² DOBREVA 2017, p. 144, context A6.

⁹³ DOBREVA 2017, pp. 51-53, context 7.

⁹⁴ KOVACHEVA 2008, p. 13, n. 2.

⁹⁵ BLEJALAC 1996, p. 18, n. 7.8, pl. I/7, II/8, n. 9, pl. I/9.

⁹⁶ CIPRIANO 2009; to this list, a stamp from *Porolissum* must be added: ARDET 2006, p. 68.

⁹⁷ KABAKCHIEVA 1986, p. 85, tab. 32.

⁹⁸ DOBREVA 2017, p. 77, pl. XXV, 132.

⁹⁹ DOBREVA 2017, p. 302, n. 963.

only findspot in Moesia Superior is Singidunum¹⁰⁰, whilst in Dacia the type is known in Cristesti and Sarmizegetusa¹⁰¹ and in Largiana, Porolissum and Tibiscum¹⁰².

5.2 *Distribution patterns*

It can be immediately acknowledged that the distribution of Italian amphorae seems to be limited to the vicinity of the course of the Danube, mostly in military sites (Fig. 5). A single exception seems to be the villa of Ivaylovgrad, in southern Thrace. We can thus easily recognise that the trade of Italian amphorae is strongly connected to the Danube waterway and the supply of military sites. As in the case of sigillata, they are found in many sites, but always in scarce numbers. Their presence in Ivaylovgrad is possibly occasional, but it must be acknowledged that the site is not far from the *via Diagonalis*, one of the most important roads of Thracia, whose role in the pottery trade has recently been highlighted¹⁰³. In this case, it is also useful to consider that Serdica was connected with Ratiaria by a road already active in 61 AD¹⁰⁴: considering the absence of Italian sigillata along the *via Diagonalis*, it could be reasonable to consider the possibility that the finds from Serdica arrived there from Ratiaria or Naissus.

¹⁰⁰ BLEJALAC 1996, pp. 19-22, nn. 22-25, pl. III, 22-25.

¹⁰¹ ARDET 2001, pp. 280-282.

¹⁰² ARDET 2001, p. 71, pl. V, 53, 54, 56.

¹⁰³ HARIZANOV 2018.

¹⁰⁴ CIL III, 6123 = 1420734. DOBREVA 2017, pp. 32-34.

6. Conclusions

Some conclusive observations can be proposed.

- Italian sigillata is a pottery class whose diffusion is strongly connected to the Roman economic influence of political control. Although fine wares and imported sigillata became widespread in the region, Italian imports occur only in a limited number of sites and almost only during the 1st – early 2nd century AD; in most of cases, the finds occur in locations connected to the presence of the army. In some of the earliest and extensively investigated sites – as *Novae* – finds are quite abundant, but in many other they just consist of few individuals; similar observations can be made for the northern Pontic region. It can thus be observed that despite the widespread geographical diffusion, Italian sigillata is a marginal presence in the general frame of fine wares in the studied area and – apart for some rare finds of late Italian production – its trade is almost limited to the early imperial period.

- At least two commercial directories were active. The first one was descending from the Danube and was directly linked to Italy through the Alpine passes that reached its superior course and through Nauportus, where the road from Aquileia reached the Sava and goods were loaded on ships. It consisted mostly of pottery from Arezzo and northern Italy; southern Italian vessels were present, but in low numbers. Goods were traded along the river: most of the cities and important military forts had river ports or quays¹⁰⁵ which were connected to the road system of the province. Significantly, most of the finds occur along the river or in It is likely that some of the products coming down the Danube river reached its end and entered the Black Sea, although no clear distinction can be proposed. The second came from the Bosphorus straits, reaching the northern Pontic region: it consists of products from Arezzo, Central and Southern Italy. Ships from Italy did not reach directly the Bosphoran cities, but it is likely that their cargoes were split in the eastern Mediterranean

¹⁰⁵ BOUNEGRU 2006; DOBREVA 2017, pp. 29-30.

or in cities on the southern coast of the Black Sea. Italian sigillata in the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean seas is quite diffused, but still a marginal presence in most centres, apart for a few ones where it is present in large quantities¹⁰⁶. It is likely that only a lesser percentage of the vessels circulating in the area found their way to the Black Sea but apparently no reference could be found in literature to the presence of Italian sigillata on the southern coast of the Black sea.

- Italian sigillata was not the sole imported fine-ware traded in the region. Gaulish sigillata was traded along the Danube waterway, gradually substituting the Italian productions since the late 1st century AD. The presence and diffusion of Eastern and Pontic Sigillata should also be considered when trying to delineate the outline of fine wares circulation in the region. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide and discuss here a general outline of the diffusion of these classes in the north-western Pontic region. Despite these limits, we can provide some observations on this subject, based on previous and not updated bibliographical survey. Pontic sigillata is present in many coastal cities where up to now no traces of Italian sigillata have been found¹⁰⁷. Eastern sigillata seems to have a different circulation pattern, as – despite having been found in some cities close to the sea – has been found in many places in the interior of Thracia, where other fine-ware types are absent: recent studies proved that its trade is linked to the road system¹⁰⁸.

It is thus evident that in the region different trade routes were active at the same time, allowing the creation of different circulation patterns for goods of different provenance.

- The chronology of stamps and the historical context suggest that while seaborne trade was already active in the Augustan period, the Danube waterway acquired importance in later times, probably when the province was established in 45 AD.

¹⁰⁶ ARCHER 2006, pp. 180-184.

¹⁰⁷ KABAKCHIEVA 1992, fig. 1.

¹⁰⁸ KABAKCHIEVA 2000b, fig. 1; HARIZANOV 2018.

- Stamp and typological analysis suggest that the two directories were distinguished by not only by the followed routes but also by the origin of the products. The Danube directory was mainly based on plain ware coming from Arezzo and northern Italy, with a clear prominence of products from the workshop of Gellius. The plain ware was mostly destined to the military sites of the Danube limes and had to respond to functional criteria. Significantly, in Novae, one of the richest sites, a recurrence of plate-bowl-beaker was observed¹⁰⁹. In the northern Pontic region, types and producers are quite different, mostly from central and southern Italy and relief-decorated products seem to occur in major percentage.

- The presence of relief-decorated sigillata can be explained by different reasons. Due to the charge-breaking practice and the intermediation of other trade centres, it can be excluded that these types were intentionally selected by Italian traders to meet the expectations of their Scythians or Bosporan clients. More probably, they were good-quality, appetible products, sold in areas with a rich tradition of fine pottery production as part of larger cargoes which were divided in intermediary centres. According to city and regional-based studies, the northern Pontic area had no direct trade contacts with Italy, although the Italian products reached Pontus and Pontic sigillata was found in Italy¹¹⁰. Their commercial connection was mediated by other centres in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Black Sea. In the well-studied case of Chersonesos, it has been pointed out that the city's major trade partners were the cities on the opposite shore of the Black Sea, as Heraclea Pontica, Sinope and Trapezon¹¹¹. These cities also acted as intermediaries for the trade of Italian and imported products for the northern coast, but it is not clear if they were the charge-breaking points or if these were in the eastern Mediterranean.

¹⁰⁹ DYCZEK 2018.

¹¹⁰ ARCHER 1992; RIZZO 2014.

¹¹¹ KADEEV – SOROCHAN 1989.

- The two directories respond to different exigencies and reflect different forms of good circulation in the Roman Empire. The first one – along the Danube – was at least partly controlled or supported by the state: its main purpose was supplying the military units of the limes. The second one, from the Eastern Mediterranean into the Black Sea, was mainly based on free trade.

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Findspot	Form	Stamp	OCK 2000	Provenance	Chronology	Literature
Thracia						
Serdica	Csp. 34.1	CORNELI	612, 11/12	Arezzo	10 – 50 AD	IVANOV 2013, fig. 1.1
Serdica	Csp. 20.4	P.L.CLE	1008, 2	Arezzo	AD 15 +	IVANOV 2013, fig. 2.4
Moesia Inferior						
Rattaria	Plate	L.GEL	879	Arezzo	15 BC – AD 50	DIMITROVA MILCEVA 2000, p. 45, n. 21.
Almus	Csp. 34/37	M.PER. CRES	1408	Arezzo	30 – 60 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 45, n. 38
Augustae	Csp. 20	GELL	878	Arezzo	10 – 50 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 44, n. 25
Montana	Cup	L. GELL	879	Arezzo	15 BC – 50 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 45, n. 35
Oescus	Cup	GELI	878	Arezzo	10 – 50 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 45, n. 33
Oescus	Cup	[L. GIEL	879	Arezzo	15 BC – 50 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 45, n. 34
Oescus	Csp. 21.3	FELICIO	818	Campania	AD 50 +	D.M. 2000, p. 47, n. 62
Oescus	Csp. 43	S.M.P.	2000, 29,	Pisa	Flavian	KABAKCHIEVA 2016, p. 597
Smocan	Csp. 33	SECVND	1842	Po Valley	1-50 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 47, n. 68
Dimum	Csp. 34	GELI	878	Arezzo	10 – 50 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 44, n. 30
Dimum	Plate	GEL [---]	/	Arezzo		MITOVA DZHONOVA 1994, fig. 6.2.
Novae	Csp. 4	MANNE	1099	Arezzo	30 – 70 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 43, n. 2
Novae	Csp. 20.4	L. GEL. L.	879, 43	Arezzo	15 BC – AD 50	D.M. 2000, p. 43, n. 11
Novae	Csp. 21.7	C. BOV.GENT	448	Arezzo	30 – 60 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 43, n. 12
Novae	Plate	L. GEL.	879	Arezzo	15 BC – AD 50	D.M. 2000, p. 44, n. 22

Novae	/	GELI	878, 38-42	Arezzo	10 – 50 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 44, n. 26
Novae	Csp. 34	GELLI	878	Arezzo	10 – 50 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 44, n. 28
Novae	Csp. 34	GELLI	878	Arezzo	10 – 50 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 44, n. 29
Novae	Csp. 34	GELI	878	Arezzo	10 – 50 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 45, n. 31
Novae	Cup	MANNE	1099	Arezzo	30 – 70 AD	D.M. 2000, p. 45, n. 36
Novae	Cup	/	/	/	/	D.M. 2000, p. 45, n. 37
Novae	Csp. 3.2	/	/	Northern Italy	50-100	D.M. 2000, p. 45, n. 41
Novae	/	GH[-]OF	/	/	/	DYČZEK 2018, p. 554, fig. 5.1
Novae	Csp. 34	C.T.SVC	1088	Po valley	30 – 80 AD	DYČZEK 2018, p. 554, fig. 5.4
Novae	Csp. 20	C[---]V	/	/	/	DYČZEK 2018, p. 554, fig. 6.13
Novae	Csp. 43	QLC	?	?	After 30 AD	DYČZEK 2018, p. 554, fig. 7.19
Northern Pontic Region						
Olbia	Cup	NAEVI	1232, 1	Pozzuoli	1-20 AD	ZHURALVEV 2008, fig. 4.3.
Olbia	/	[---]AR	?	?	?	Z. 2008, fig. 3,7
Olbia	Cup	ANTIOCHVS	207, 1	Pozzuoli	10 BC – 10 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 4.2
Olbia	Cup	P. CORNE	624, 17	Arezzo	5 BC – 40 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 4.4
Olbia	/	QAR[V]I	257	?	10 BC – 15 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 3.6
Olbia	/	ARVI	252, 4	Arezzo	15 BC – 15 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 5.2
Olbia	/	CAMVR[---]	514, 11	Arezzo	30-70 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 4.6

Olbia	/	L.GELI	879	Arezzo	15 BC – 50 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 4,8
Olbia	/	GELI	878	Arezzo	10-50 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 4,4
Olbia	/	VIBIE	2368, 14 (?)	?	10 BC – 10 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 4,8
Olbia	Csp. 22	L[---]	/	/	/	Z. 2008, fig. 5,3
Olbia	Csp. 34	L.VM.H	2470, 6 (?)	Torrta di Siena	After 50 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 5,1
Chersonesos	/	L.T.I.	?	?	?	Z. 2008, p. 107
Chersonesos	/	POMPE.SERENI	336	Pozzuoli	10 BC – 10 AD	Z. 2008, p. 107
Panticapaeum	Csp. 34	C.MVRI	1200, 3	?	After 15 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 8,5
Panticapaeum	/	SER	1874, 4	?	10 BC – 15 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 8,1.
Panticapaeum	/	P[---]/MEM	1153, 3	Arezzo	?	Z. 2008, fig. 8,2.
Belbek IV	Csp. 23	ATEI	144, 137	Pisa	5 BC – 25 AD	ZHURALVEV 2000, p. 151, fig. 2,1.
Gorgippia	Csp. 6	GELI	878	Arezzo	10 – 50 AD	Z. 2008, fig. 8,3.
Crimea ?	/	CN.ATEI	275	Arezzo	15 – 5 BC	KROPOTKIN 1970

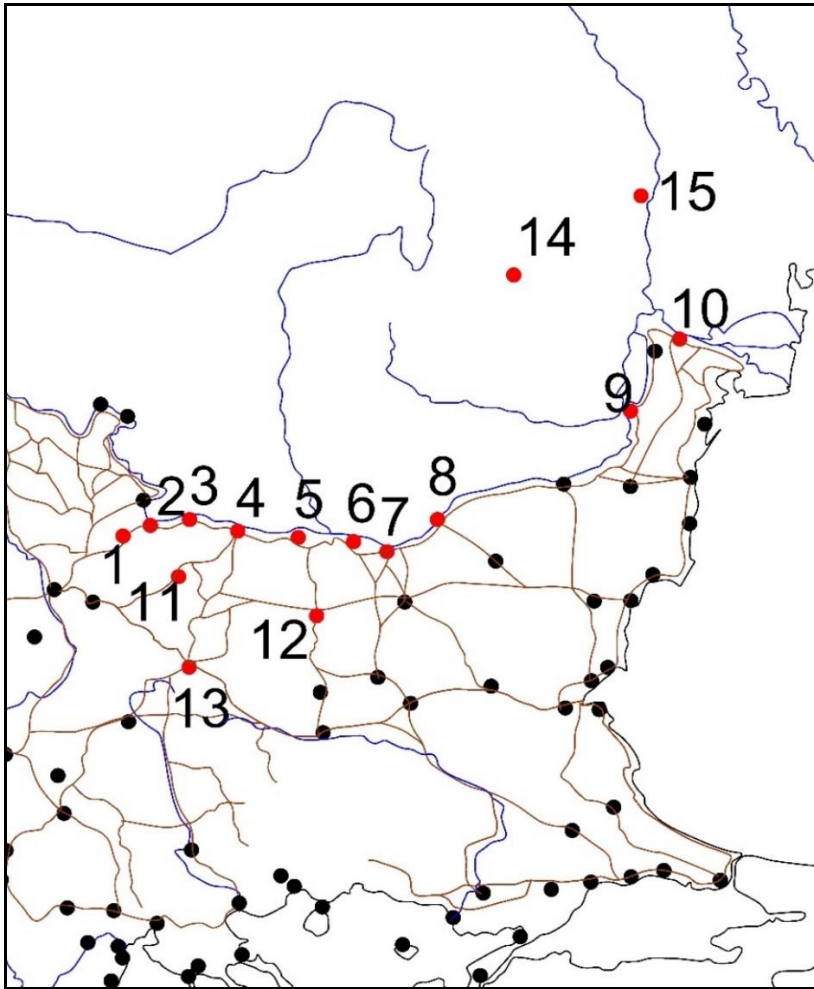


Fig. 1. Finds of Italian sigillata in Thracia, Moesia Inferior and Geto-Dacian territory. 1 Conbustica; 2 Ratiaria; 3 Almus; 4 Augustae; 5 Oescus; 6 Dimum; 7 Novae; 8 Sexaginta Prista; 9 Carsium; 10 Noviodunum; 11 Montana; 12 Melta; 13 Serdica; 14 Brad; 15 Cernat.

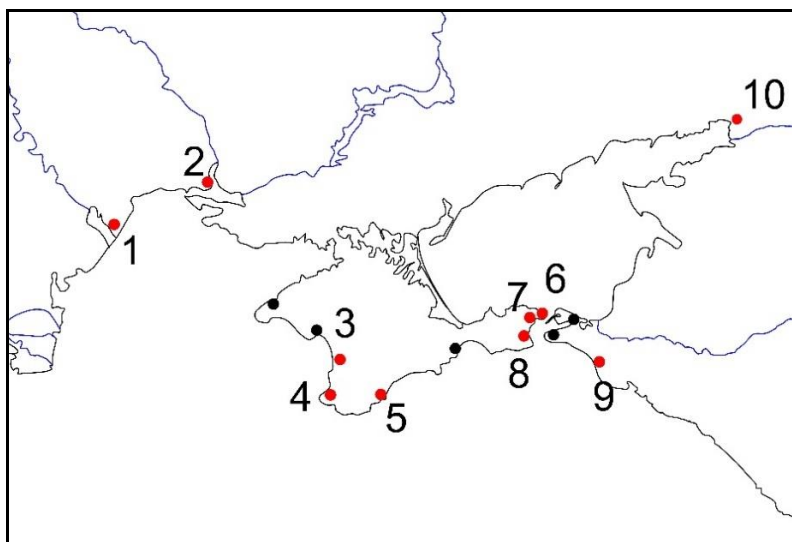


Fig. 2. Finds of Italian sigillata in the Northern Pontic region. 1 Tyras; 2 Olbia; 3 Belbek IV; 4 Chersonesos; 5 Gurzufskoe; 6 Myrmekion; 7 Pantikapaion; 8 Nymphaion; 9 Gorgippia; 10 Tanais.

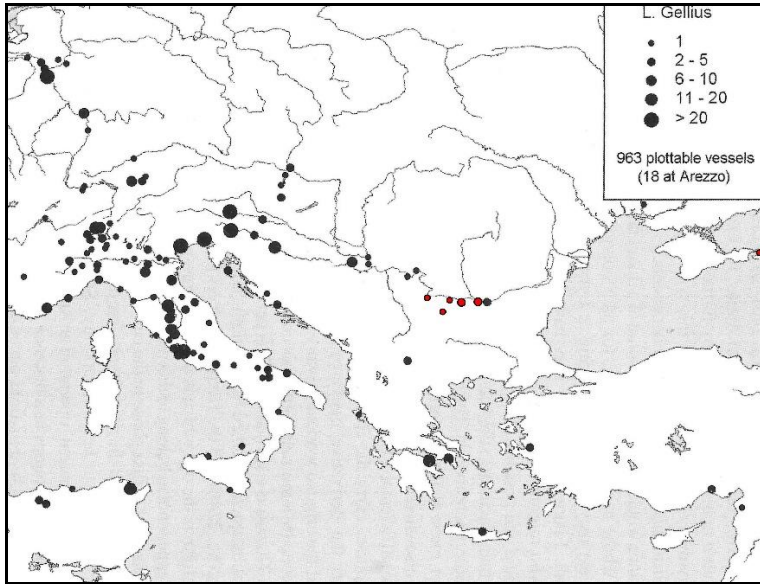


Fig. 3. Distribution of vessels stamped by Gellius (Elaboration from OXE – COMFORT – KENDRICK 2000).

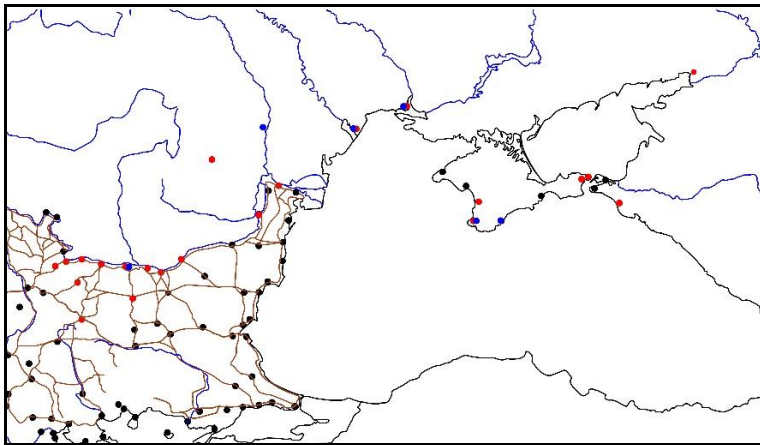


Fig. 4. Finds of plain (red) and relief (blue) sigillata.

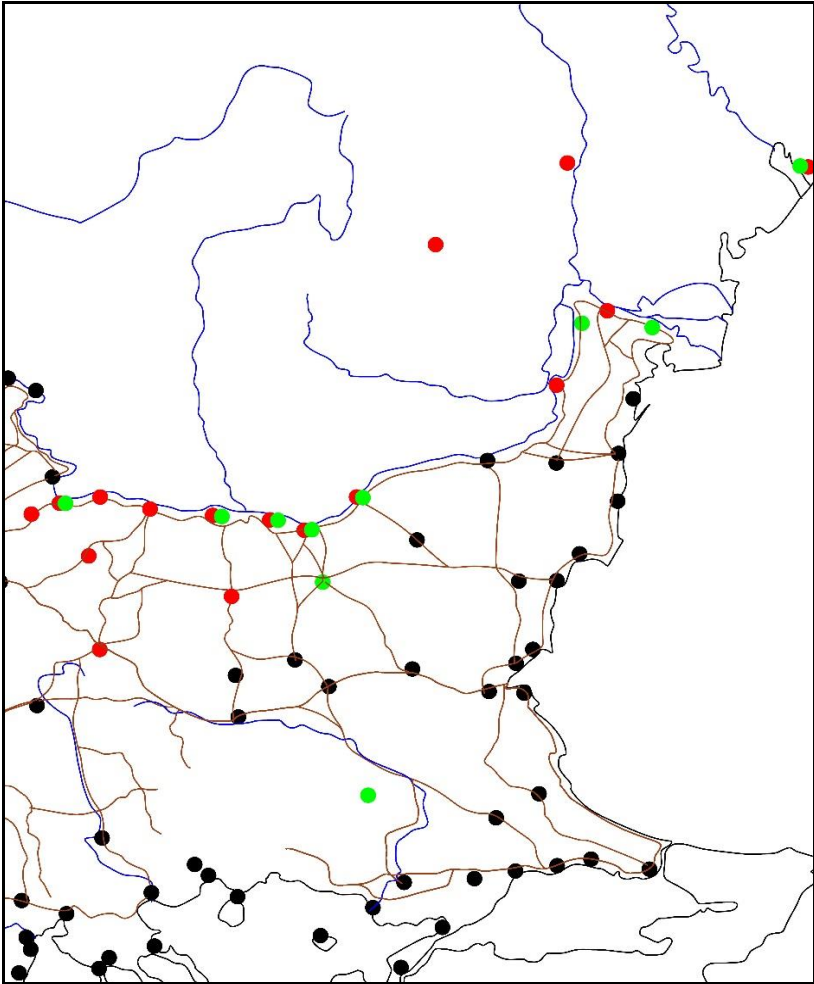


Fig. 5. Finds of Italian amphorae (green, all types) and sigillata (red) in Thracia and Moesia Inferior.