Towards the Identification of a Major Ceramic Tableware Industry of the Eastern Mediterranean: Eastern Sigillata A

There are relatively few explicit references to vessels of clay in Classical literature, and the Greek and Latin words for most of the ceramic wares defined by modern scholarship elude us – perhaps in part because the ancient names were not applied with the same rigour as those of present-day scholars. Vās was, for instance, a generic term for a vessel or dish of metal or clay, and vasa samia presumably originally referred to vessels made in the Greek island of Samos, but came to be used by Roman writers as a general name for “ceramic tablewares”. In other instances, as in the case of vasa arretina, the ancient and modern meanings overlap, but even so no one will presumably claim that they are congruent. In Antiquity, this term at first referred specifically to vessels made at Arezzo, but later came to have a wider meaning.

Faced with such uncertainties modern scholars have invented their own names for the ceramic wares they have defined. Thus, in 1957, Kathleen Kenyon suggested the label “Eastern Sigillata” for a family of ceramic tablewares with a glossy red-slipped surface of Eastern Mediterranean making. At first, the tag referred exclusively to the wares Eastern Sigillata A, B, and C, but it was later broadened to include Cypriot Sigillata, Sagalassos Red Slip Ware, and even Pontic Sigillata. Scholars have found these des-

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1 *LSJ* 1959 s.v. «vās».
3 *Hilgers* 1969, pp. 22-23, note 70.
4 *Kenyon* 1957, pp. 281-284.
5 For the history of research of these wares, see *Kazenwaadel* 1995, pp. 70-80. The basic classification is that of *Hayes* 1985 with copious references to earlier studies; for an update, see *Hayes* 2001, and for Sagalassos Red Slip Ware *Poblome* 1999. *Malfitana* 2002 offers a first quantitative overview of the occurrences of these wares in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Fund of Scientific Research, Flanders, is supporting the ICRATES-project (G.0152.04) (http://milennium.arts.kuleuven.ac.be/icrates/), aimed at establishing a GIS-platform of all published sigillata finds in the Roman East. These results are also integrated in a Consorted Action of the Flemish Government (GOA 97/2).