

Brill's New Pauly

Terra sigillata

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I. Definition and Delimitation

Modern technical term for a kind of plateware of Roman fine ceramics ([pottery II](#)) with red surface and usually a name stamp. Writers of antiquity (e.g. Pin. nat. 35,160) seem to suggest a connection with [Samian Ware](#) (*Samia vasa*) [1]. TS developed around 40 BC in the west out of [black-glaze ware](#). Black variants precede the red TS in Arezzo ([Arretium](#)) and the Po Valley ([Padus](#)). The existence of a precursor 'red' stage, a so-called presigillata, is disputed [2. 4]. TS quickly replaced the hitherto predominant black-glaze ceramics on Mediterranean markets and was produced in regional centres into the 7th cent. AD. In table ware made of TS, open forms predominate.

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II. Production

The vessels were formed with a technique that combined use of the potter's wheel and moulds, then fired in an oxidizing atmosphere, bringing about the red hue ([pottery II. A.3.f](#)). The potter decorated his vessels by means of stamps, roller-die decorations, relief appliqué, barbotine technique, incised designs, as well as with relief created using a pottery mould ([stamped ware relief ware](#)). Ornamentation of Arretine TS can be traced back directly to the wealth of motifs of its Hellenistic (metal) models; it soon adopts the motifs of the Augustan era, e.g. Victoria in front of the [Tropaion](#) or on a biga, or the satyrs and maenades of the Bacchic world; there is also undecorated and unstamped TS ware. Stamps ('signatures') of the Arretine and Gallic workshops give us insight into the way workshops were organized (cf. [Pottery, production of, Potters](#)). Graffiti from areas where there were workshops can also provide such information [4]; thus, a list in Greek lettering with the names of eight slaves from Arezzo who belonged to a body (ordo) of plate manufacturers (*catillarii*), was found not long ago [5].

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III. Research History

TS is one of the best-researched categories of pottery in antiquity. Initially, interest centered mainly on the stamped inscriptions. M.A. Alessi compiled a list of the names of Arretine manufacturers as early as 1492 [6] (cf. CIL XI). Earliest classification of the vessels was done

in 1895 by H. Dragendorff vorgenommen [7], his work soon becoming the typological guide. Further typologies, based on finds at the sites Haltern (on the Lippe) and Hofheim (in Taunus), were compiled in 1909 and 1912 [8; 9]. Even complete sets of tableware can be identified [2. 46-47, 50]. The newer classifications of 1981 [10], 1985 [11], and 1990 [2] are based increasingly on methods from the natural sciences. The manufacturers' stamps on Italian TS have recently been published in a new edition [12]. In more recent research the focus has been increasingly on the economic significance of TS [12. 36-50; 13; 14] ([Pottery Trade](#)).

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IV. Categories

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A. Italy/Arezzo

Production of TS in Italy began around 40 BC in Arezzo ([Arretium](#)) [2; 12]. Today it is assumed that there were about ten other production sites in Italy, some of which have been documented. Production outside of Arezzo began in the late 1st cent. BC (i.a. with the potter Iucundus). Two findings suggest that such production was inspired by Arezzo: the large-scale enterprise of Cn. Ateius is linked to Arezzo and Pisa ([Pisae](#)) by workshop finds [15]; the proprietor had probably built up a branch location for himself nearer to the sea because of better export possibilities. Arretine moulds can also be documented for Lyon ([Lugdunum](#);) they most likely come from a potter who emigrated from Arezzo (end of 1st cent. BC) [16]. From about 75 to 150 AD, the region around Pisa is one of the most important suppliers of Late Italic TS [17; 18]. A typical proprietor of a large workshop here is L. Rasinius Pisanus; his name was imprinted on wares by means of rectangular stamps (*tabella ansata*), foot-shaped stamps (*planta pedis*), or half-moon stamps; his workshop was active between 50 and 120 AD. There are large differences with regard to the distribution of the wares of individual workshops [12. 46-49, Illus. 10-11].

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B. Western Provinces

Under the influence of the Arretine workshops, production of TS in southern Gaul began during the Augustan period. Apart from the short-lived production site Lyon-La Murette [16; 19; 2. 19 f.], the sites La Graufesenque (Aveyron; [Pottery, production of](#)) and Montans in particular yield indications of significant TS production [19; 20; 2. 18 f.]. Starting in about 25 AD, the wares manufactured here were exported to the northern provinces of the Roman Empire and, after 50 AD, to the Mediterranean countries as well. In Pompeii, a crate of TS from southern Gaul was found that had not yet been unpacked [21]. In Lezoux, in central France, the same development can be observed, beginning in the Tiberian era. Short-lived TS workshops have been documented in the Germanic provinces as well as in Spain and Helvetia [2. 20 f.; 11. 97-174; 22], sometimes in connection with the Roman military, as in Haltern

[23]. Occasionally, however, production can be documented going into the 2nd cent. AD [4; 24] and, in the case of the later workshops, the 3rd and 4th cent. AD.

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C. Eastern Mediterranean

Five different kinds of TS have been identified in the east [11. 1-96]: 'Eastern Sigillata A' from Syria or [Cilicia](#), 'B' from western Turkey ([Tralleis](#) and [Ephesus](#)) and 'C' (= *Çandarlı-Ware*) from the [Pergamon region](#), Cypriot [14] and Pontic TS ([Pontus Euxinus](#)). TS production began in Asia Minor and Syria as early as the middle of the 2nd cent. BC (although not always with a red surface). Italian influence is not discernible until between 10 BC and 10 AD. Eastern Sigillata B in particular developed under the influence of Italian potters, as can be seen from names on stamps like 'C. Centius' of Arezzo and 'Serenus' of [Puteoli](#). Otherwise, the language on the stamps in the eastern provinces is usually Greek. These products were distributed mostly in the eastern Mediterranean region, with Carthage and Rome as the most important commercial destinations in the west.

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D. North Africa

From the late 1st cent. AD on, TS wares ('African Red Slip Ware') from the area around Carthage ('TS Africana A', to c. 300 AD) – and later from the provinces of Africa, Byzacena and Numidia – drove other TS wares out of Mediterranean markets. 'TS Africana C' was produced in central Tunisia (220-500 AD), while 'TS Africana D' (4th to 7th cent. AD) was the product of many centres in northern Tunisia. The most important classifications: [25; 26], recently improved chronology: [27], cf. [10. 9-224].

[Logistics](#); [Armies](#); [Crockery](#); [Pottery trade](#); [Pottery, production of](#); [Lamp](#); [Relief ware](#); [Stamped ware](#); [Table utensils](#); [Pottery](#); [Vases](#)

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