

ROADS AND RIVERS, POTS AND POTTERS IN PANNONIA - INTERACTIONS, ANALOGIES AND DIFFERENCES

Zagreb, 2022

ZBORNİK INSTITUTA ZA ARHEOLOGIJU
SERTA INSTITUTI ARCHAEOLOGICI
KNJIGA / VOLUME XVII

IZDAVAČ / PUBLISHER

Institut za arheologiju, Jurjevska ulica 15, 10000 Zagreb

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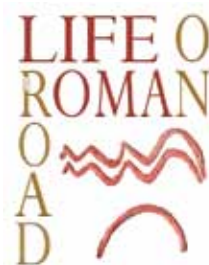
HŽ Putnički prijevoz d.o.o., Strojarska cesta 11, Zagreb

CIRCULATION

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CIP zapis dostupan u računalnom katalogu Nacionalne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu pod brojem 001140356

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available in the Online Catalogue of the National and University Library in Zagreb as 001140356

ISBN 978-953-6064-59-5

The publication results from the project LIFE ON THE ROMAN ROAD: communications, trade and identities on Roman roads in Croatia from 1st – 8th CE, UIP-05-2017-9768, supported by Croatian Science Foundation.

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Preface

There are many names in Croatian, German and English for class of pottery discussed in this volume.

Generally accepted terms are:

- Panonska keramika s premazom (PKP)
- Pannonische Glanztonware (PGW)
- Pannonian slipped ware (PSW)

The PKP, PGW or PSW is a group of pottery widespread in *Pannonia*, but also in *Noricum* and *Moesia*, from the end of the 1st well into the 3rd century A.D and even later. The shapes of the vessels recall the forms of the Terra Sigillata, but some of them also show the influence of the local utility ware. The appearance of this group can be described as high-quality pottery with a slip. It was produced in a reduced, oxidant and mixed atmosphere: as a result, there are black, grey, red, and orange vessels.

In this book, authors were allowed to follow their thoughts and intuition to create the information about the Pannonian slipped ware in the region they work. The lack of publications, especially in Croatia, was the main problem in developing more uniform descriptions of types and features that form the PSW. We hope to create a fixed point from which a more comprehensive study can be made.

We are grateful to all colleagues who submitted an article for this publication. This way, we have gathered some of the current knowledge on this topic, and we hope to continue our cooperation. We can say that this publication is a work of a small study group dedicated to one topic.

In the meantime, by May 13, 2022, an important article about Pannonische Glanztonware that was published on the website of Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz (RGZM) "disappeared" from the Internet. RGZM is developing a new modern website. Hopefully, the paper will appear again on the new RGZM site.

A possible new link is: <https://web.rgzm.de/forschung/forschungsinfrastrukturen/infrastrukturen/wissenschaftliche-it-digitale-plattformen-und-tools/online-datenbanken/>

Editors

POTTERY FROM VIMINACIUM – CHARACTERISTICS AND MULTIPURPOSE FUNCTION

Overview of the part of pottery vessels discovered at Viminacium is given in the article. Techniques of making and decorating as well as their multipurpose use are presented. The most common working technique in the treatment of outer surface of vessels are colouring, engraving and stamping. Most of the vessels are dated to the period from the beginning of the second to the end of the third century. Certain forms had a short expiration date, while some underwent several production making changes. These are locally produced vessels intended for everyday use. Among them, according to their decoration, vessels made after the luxury imported models stand out. The research of Viminacium confirmed the role of its pottery-brick production center, which, with its production and distribution, met the needs of both the city itself and the surrounding provinces.¹

Key words: Viminacium, craft center, slip, engraving, stamping, terra sigillata, relief decoration, antiquity.

The archaeological site of Viminacium is located next to the village of Kostolac, in the immediate vicinity of the conflux of the Mlava and Danube rivers. As the capital city of Upper Moesia, it used to be the largest craft center of this province. Among the wide variety of crafts, the most developed one was pottery. Besides the production of bricks, lamps, terracottas etc., the production of vessels was one of the most prolific trades.

One of the craft centers of Viminacium was discovered during the rescue excavations conducted on the area of its southern necropolises. The material obtained there made it possible to determine the shapes, functions and style of its product assortment, while chemical analyses provided the information about the composition of clay, clay pits and the distribution of end products.

The analysis of the ceramic material from the craft center and all the other researched locations showed a very diverse assortment of vessel shapes. The largest portion of locally produced vessels is thin-walled medium-coarse ware made on potter's wheel. The clay these vessels are made of is rich in iron minerals, so most of the vessels are fired red, if they were fired in oxidising atmosphere, or grey to black, if fired in reduction atmosphere. In most cases, their outer surface is slipped with a red coating which rubs off. (Plate 1)

The predominant shapes indicate that these were mostly vessels used in everyday life, for preparing, serving and consuming foods and drinks. (Plate 2: 1) There is also a large number of vessels used for storage or transport. Among the vessels imported to Viminacium, the most common ones are amphorae (Bjelajac 1996: 109-114), and then terra sigillata bowls (Bjelajac 1990: 190).

The vessels discovered in this craft center were mainly fired at temperatures between 850 and 1050 °C (Raičković 2012: 163). Each shape was made of the same clay body, but some specimens are of higher quality than the others. The vessels determined as jugs, produced specifically for the needs of the the necropolis, are of poorest quality.

¹ This paper was created as an activity of the project *Life on the Roman road: communications, trade and identities on Roman roads in Croatia from 1st – 8th CE* (UIP-05-2017-9768) funded by the Croatian Science Foundation.

More than 13500 graves with inhumation and cremation burials have been discovered on the area of the necropolis within which this craft center was found (Korać, Golubović 2009, 12). Most of these graves contained grave goods consisting of ceramic vessels, oil lamps and terracottas. Their number, as well as the specific position in which they were laid, vary among the individual graves. What is common to all of them is that in more than 95% of cases these pottery items were local products.

Besides the necropolis area, the existence of products of local workshops was also confirmed on all the other researched locations in the region of Viminacium, while a portion of its product assortment reached other settlements of the province of Upper Moesia, along the Iron Gate Limes, and was also distributed to the surrounding provinces of Pannonia and Dacia. Surprisingly, the quality of these vessels varies, depending on whether they were intended for the necropolis or discovered in the residential layers, although it is confirmed that they come from the same workshops.

Economic status and social trends can, to a degree, be traced through the ceramic materials. Some forms of vessels (bowls) are characterized by great differences in size and volume, as well as in the quality of clay that certain types are made of, while other forms (jugs) are completely uniform and do not differ across the Empire. The forms used over a long period of time gradually change their basic profilation (the neck of the jugs becomes shorter, or bodies of pots become more elongated). Comparing these local products to other, chronologically equivalent ones, we can notice great discrepancies. It does not have to indicate a change in ethnical terms, but rather in the material culture- that local population retained the details of the autochthonous material culture to a higher or lower degree.

Although the forms and types of vessels are well-known, and the pattern of concentration and distribution of certain product groups established, we should also pay attention to the petrological analyses to confirm the accuracy of current theses and analogies concerning the scope of distribution of this local workshop's products. The problem arises specifically in the case of vessels for everyday use, since the data concerning their style do not yield sufficient information, while, by their nature, they have a wide area of distribution. The proximity of the Danube made the transportation of this craft center's products to other cities much easier.

The most common type of outer surface treatment is simple slipping. (Plate 1) The vessels were mostly slipped in different tones of red paint, not very hard-wearing (since it rubs off).

Besides slipping, varnishing and painting on the inner and outer surface of the vessels, there are also various other types of ornaments. (Plate 2 & 3 : 1-14) The most common ones are grooves and incisions. Incision is most commonly used on cylindrical pots and jugs (Plate 2: 2, 3). This method of decoration probably originated from glass faceting. Incised letters on pots' bodies are the most common form of such decoration. Bowls, pots and jugs were more often decorated with grooves. Ribbed ornamentation is most frequent on the vessels made of sandy, kaolin clay, (Plate 2: 6-9) no matter the type (pots, bowls or jugs). When it comes to stamping, although this type of decoration appears on the vessels from south Pannonia from the end of the 1st to the middle of the 2nd century, this is not the case in Viminacium.

With the appearance of the imitation of terra sigillata vessels, craftsmen begin to apply stamping, besides relief decoration. The find of three smaller clay stamps, fired red, used for vessel decoration within the craft center also confirms this (Raičković 2007: T. XVII/11-13). This type of decoration dates back to pre-Roman traditions, while the technique itself, applied by the provincial craftsmen, reveals the tastes of the local population.

The major portion of stamped ceramics comes from the city and suburban area, from the area of the amphitheatre, thermae and the settlement located east of Viminacium. The rest of them are of funerary character. Among the vessels functioning as grave goods, the ones with stamped decoration are bowls and plates, found in equal proportion in cremation and inhumation burials.

Ornamentation was applied mostly on the outer surfaces of the vessels, except in the case of plates, where stamped decoration appears on the rims or the inner side of the recipient. The production of this type of vessels had two phases in Viminacium. The earlier variant appears during the 2nd century, while the later one encompasses the period from the second half of the 3rd to the middle of the 4th century (Bogdanović 2017: 268).

One of the characteristics is that this type of decoration is only used on luxury tableware. The craftsmen used different combination of stamps for ornamentation, so it is extremely difficult to find analogies. Not a single specimen of a signed stamped vessel has been discovered yet. The vessels belonging to the cultural horizons of the 2nd century are mostly medium-coarse ware, fired red and painted or varnished in red tones. The only exceptions are a few vessels which are fired grey and painted grey or black. These specimens also have polished surfaces, and are characterized by consistency in ornament organization- decoration is arranged in rows, with motifs which repeat or simply occupy the central part of the inner surface of the vessel. The favorite motif is leaf, stylized in different ways, then rosette, sickle motif, but also *planta pedis*. (Plate 5:21)

The earlier phase is characterized by vessel forms made by the example of the imported ones, made in terra sigillata technique and decorated with floral motifs. The characteristics of the later phase are the form of biconical vessels decorated with floral and geometrical motifs, while figural representations appear only in rare cases.

The bell-shaped form of vessels, the local variant of Drag. 29, is predominant in the earlier group. Across the middle part, and often also at the very bottom, they have a simple decoration in one row created by repetition of leaf motifs, (Plate 4) occasionally combined with rosettes. There are only one or two specimens of bowls made by the example of Drag. 35 and Drag. 37 in Viminacium (Bogdanović 2017: T. I-269, II-270, III-272); here, leaf motifs are at the bottom, or their repetition creates a lattice-like rhombuses and stylized egg-and-dart motifs on the outer surface of the vessel. Their analogies are found in Pannonia, among Pannonian grey ware with more elaborate stamped ornamentation, dated to the 2nd century. In Upper Moesia, analogies are found in Singidunum. In the product assortment of Viminacium's workshops, there are three bowl forms with stamped decoration. They all have planta pedis motif, but also leaf motifs, on the inner surface of the vessel, always together with a circular ornament made with a wheel cutter. They were most likely made by the example of Consp. 36 and Consp. 37 forms of Arretine ware (Bogdanović 2017: 270).

Pots with stamped decoration appear extremely infrequently. One of the most common pot forms from Viminacium has two or three handles, a cylindrical neck and ovoid body on a ring-shaped foot. They appear during a wide chronological span from the 2nd to the 4th century, with different profiles. This form of pots is often ornamented with various techniques, like painting, polishing, applications and engraving. One larger pot of this type was discovered and it had three handles and snake applications, (Plate 5:27) so it was classed as a cult vessel. They are considered to be products of Viminacium (Bogdanović 2017: 272). There is only one more stamped pot in Viminacium- a smaller two-handled one with a conical neck and round body. It is decorated with repeated heart-shaped motif across the middle of the body, and with no analogies. (Plate 5:28)

The earlier phase of stamped vessels is also represented with variants Drag. 17, 18 and 36 of local plates. The ornamentation in the form of stylized leaves and planta pedis motif appears on the vessels of all three types, and they are concentrated in the central part of the bottom of the plate. Analogies to these samples are found within Moesian, Pannonian and Dacian workshops, so it can be said that the plates belong to the popular imported forms, after which the local craftsmen made their products in the 2nd and 3rd century. The vessels belonging to the earlier group, from the cultural horizons of the 2nd century, are medium-coarse ware fired red. The surface of these vessels is most commonly painted or varnished in red tones.

The later phase of the vessels with stamped ornamentation is characterized by a smaller number of vessel forms, but much more diverse ornamentation. Besides floral ornaments, there are also geometrical ones, and occasionally even figural representations. The most common form is a biconical bowl. Among the imported forms, the most common one is Consp.33.1.2, the example after which local variants were made (Bogdanović 2017: T. V). The products of local craftsmen are characterized by biconical form and rich floral and geometrical ornamentation, arranged into several horizontal rows or medallions. Analogies have not been found. On the plates from this phase, ornamentation is placed along the rim of the vessel, by alternate repetition of two or more motifs.

The largest portion of the vessels of the later phase is dated to the 2nd half of the 3rd century. They are medium-coarse ware, fired grey or red, and with surfaces painted in red or grey tones.

The differences in quality between the earlier and later group are virtually non-existent, since workmanship was equally good for both. Except for the introduction of new forms, the motif repertoire is enriched, too; likewise, the arrangement of ornaments on the vessels is changed. Three types of motifs- floral, geometrical and figural, are combined, creating unique compositions, with no possibility to find their analogies.

The technique of stamping was accepted by the provincial craftsmen in a short time, so the continuity in production can be traced from the 2nd century, when local potters create the first specimens, all the way to the 2nd half of the 3rd or middle of the 4th century, when the production of stamped vessels ceases. Most likely, vessels with stamped ornaments were produced within the existing workshops. Production of relief and polished terra sigillata in Viminacium was happening along with the appearance of this type of ware in the 2nd century. The increased production of luxury ware diminished the significance of import, which resulted in the decrease in the inflow of vessels from large pottery centers.

The paper presents an overview of the shape, function and structure of ceramic vessels discovered during the decades-long archaeological excavations of Viminacium. These vessels are the product of a local pottery craft complex. The chemical and mineralogical characterization of the pottery production of this workshop suggests the presence of several groups of ceramic clays. Several basic clay masses are distinguished in relation to whether the final product

was intended for preparing food, its consuming, or ritual laying in the grave of an inhumated or cremated deceased. Mineralogical and chemical examinations were conducted over the raw materials and it was determined that besides this pottery craft center, there had to be another one in which was used the clay from the same loan. This conclusion follows the extensive analysis of the product range from this pottery complex, which is compared with the forms discovered on the necropolis itself and in the settlement stratum. Forms that do not appear in the pottery range of this center, but are discovered at necropolises or in settlement stratum with the same chemical index in clay mass, must have been the product of another workshop at Viminacium whose production went parallel with the first one. The specificity of the material of this workshop complex is reflected in the fact that craftsmen who have responded to the needs of pottery use in funerary rituals at the necropolises have made these products in poor quality compared to those distributed to the living part of the population.

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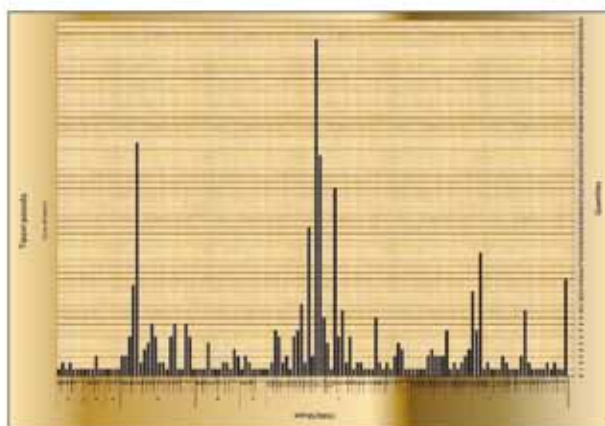
SAŽETAK

KERAMIKA IZ VIMINACIJA - KARAKTERISTIKE I VIŠENAMJENSKE FUNKCIJE

Ključne riječi: *Viminacium*, zanatski centar, premazivanje, urezivanje, pečatiranje, terra sigillata, reljefni ukras, antika.

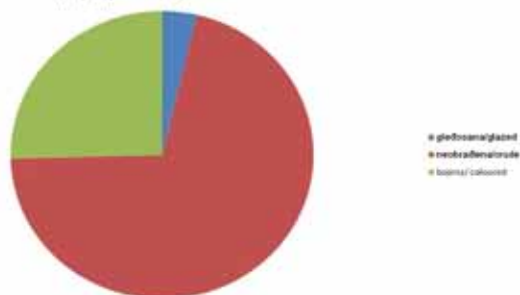
U radu je dat pregled dijela keramičkih posuda otkrivenih na Viminaciju. Prikazane su tehnike izrade i ukrašavanja kao i njihova višenamjenska upotreba. Najčešća tehnika obrade vanjske površine posuda je premazivanje, urezivanje i pečatiranje. Najveći dio posuda datiran je u period od početka drugog do kraja trećeg stoljeća. Određene forme su imale kratak rok upotrebe, dok su neke pretrpjele više razvojnih promjena. Radi se o lokalno proizvedenim posudama namijenjenim svakodnevnoj upotrebi. Među njima svojom dekoracijom se ističu posude rađene po uzoru na luksuzne importne posude. Istraživanjem Viminacija je potvrđena uloga njegovog grnčarsko opekarskog centra koji je svojom proizvodnjom i distribucijom podmirivao potrebe kako samog grada tako i okolnih provincija.

Pl. 1

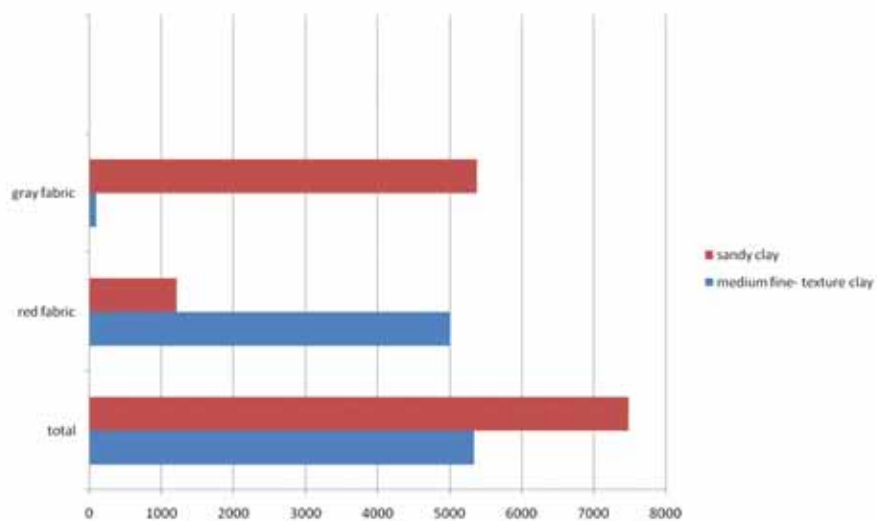


a

spoljna površina/ outer surface



b



c

Plate 1. Pottery forms (a), outer surface (b), relationship between sandy and medium fine texture clay (c)

Pl. 2



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

Plate 2. Predominant shapes of pottery

Pl. 3



10



11



12



13



14

Plate 3. Special decoration techniques

Pl. 4



15



18



16



19



17



20

Plate 4. Stamps

Pl. 5



21



22



23



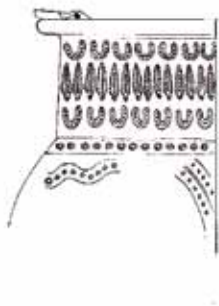
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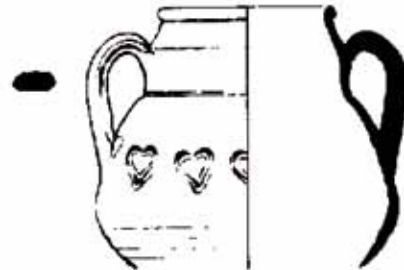
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26



27



28



Plate 5. Stamps