

TRADITION AND INFLUENCE IN THE DACIAN POTTERY DISCOVERED AT SARMIZEGETUSA REGIA*

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Abstract: This paper aims to identify the Mediterranean and Celtic influences in the Dacian pottery from Sarmizegetusa Regia. The imitated or influenced vessels correspond mainly to tableware and storage jars, while cooking ware tends to belong to a local cultural layer, in regards to morphology and technology. Late Hellenistic and Roman technical influences used by the Dacian craftsmen are: slip, painting and stamped decoration. Laboratory analyses showed that both in the cases of tableware and kitchen pottery, the “recipes” used by the potters working in the ceramic workshops on the Grădiște Hill were practically identical.

Rezumat: Această lucrare își propune identificarea influențelor mediteraneene și celtice regăsite în ceramica dacică de la Sarmizegetusa Regia. Vasele imitate sau inspirate se înscriu în principal în rândurile veselei de masă sau ale vaselor de provizii, în timp ce vesela de gătit pare să urmeze tiparele unui filon cultural autohton, atât în ceea ce privește morfologia vaselor, cât și procesul tehnologic. Influențe elenistice târzii și romane se pot observa și în unele tehnici folosite de olarii daci: aplicarea angobei, pictarea sau ștampilarea. De remarcat însă este faptul că analizele de laborator au arătat că atât în cazul veselei de masă, cât și a celei de gătit, „rețetele” utilizate de meșterii din atelierele ceramice de pe Dealul Grădiștii sunt practic identice.

The Dacian pottery discovered at Grădiștea de Munte – Sarmizegetusa Regia (Fig. 1/a) is a less known and studied category of archaeological material. Nevertheless, its distinctive note was underlined many times in the context of the ceramic production in pre-Roman Dacia, due to the fine wheel-made wares and, most of all, to the figurative style of painted vessels, which are not present in other Dacian settlements or fortifications. It was well noted that, at least from the technological point of view, the Dacian products resemble some of the Mediterranean wares, but Celtic influences may be identified as well. The handmade cooking pots received less or almost no attention at all.

Therefore, I intend to list briefly the potential technological, stylistic, morphological and functional imports or/and influences, making note, as much as possible, of the ways in which those were adapted in the ceramic repertoire of Sarmizegetusa Regia, and of the (existing) local contribution. The result of this succinct analysis¹ should help to reconsider the originality of the ceramic industry in the Dacian Kingdom’s capital.²

Some historiographical landmarks

As previously mentioned, the quality of the Dacian tableware unearthed at Grădiștea de Munte was noted by the archaeologists since the discovery of such numerous ceramic fragments, in different contexts (especially in civil edifices and their annexes).³ Not only the good quality of firing or the finesse execution of those vessels have impressed the specialists, but also the “classical” aspect of the ceramic shapes, comparable to the late Hellenistic or Roman products.⁴ In addition, the presence of the painted pottery, featuring a particular thematic and ornamental register, apart from other similar findings from outside the area of the Orăștie Mountains, has supported the opinion according to which the Dacian potters from Sarmizegetusa Regia were inspired by the imperial luxury wares in terms of technology (the slip, the painting, the stamped decoration) and form (such “imported” shapes are the *situla*, the storage jar, the krater or the spouted bowl).⁵

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¹ The study of the Dacian pottery discovered on the terraces of Sarmizegetusa Regia, as well as in the others fortresses and settlements in the Șureanu Mountains has recently restarted.

² Florea 2011, p. 138.

³ Daicoviciu *et alii* 1953, pp. 182-187.

⁴ Crișan 1969, pp. 152, 215-216; Florea 1993, p. 108; Florea 1998, p. 145; Florea 2000, p. 272; Florea 2001, p. 180; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 142; Cristescu 2013.

⁵ Crișan 1969, p. 214; Glodariu 1974, p. 141 ; Florea 1998, pp. 181-183; Gheorghiu 2005, pp. 139-146.